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LOVE OR PRIDE


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LOVE OR PRIDE

ADAPTED FROM THE SWEDISH

BY

ANNIE WOOD





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LOVE OR PRIDE.

CHAPTER I.

COMING OF AGE.

On an estate in the south of Sweden there stood before a window a young man, who was looking abroad upon fields and meadows, park and forest. He owned the whole. So far as the eye could see, all was his. But it was easy to observe that his possessions did not then occupy his thoughts. A tinge of seriousness shaded his face—the youthful face of a man of one-and-twenty years. Life opened before his mental vision as a cheerful picture, brighter than the scenes then expanded before him. But he was not able to treat existence as an illusion; and at this moment, when he first appears before us, he had just arrived at a decision which he expected would greatly influence his future life. Suddenly he turned from the window, saying, 'Mother, I have decided.'

4 9

The lady divined his meaning, but did not answer immediately. After remaining some moments quietly near the large stove where she had been sitting, she slightly raised her head, and said, softly—

'If you have decided, I will not any more try to dissuade you. Come to me, Nils!'

He came over, and, kneeling down by the easy chair in which she sat, threw his arms around her, and leaned his head on her bosom. In this posture they remained. Few words passed, but the thoughts of both mother and son were absorbing. She had married at sixteen, and within two years was left a widow with one son, and one of the largest estates in Sweden to manage for him. She educated her son, and managed his property. How she fulfilled the first duty, his future life proved. The estate had been well cared for. On this morning—the morning of his one-and-twentieth birthday—he became entitled to complete possession of his property. On the title-deed being presented, he exclaimed, 'I cannot accept it, mother; I cannot accept it!' And this answer was the first sorrow he had ever given her in his life.

'Not accept it! What do you mean?'

'At least, not now. Mother, forgive me that I could not force myself to tell you before, so as to prepare you. I have only just made this decision. I am not fit for this responsibility. The hundreds of people dependent on me will have, more or less, their whole happiness hanging upon my caprice, my will, my untried judgment. No! I cannot control, cannot manage myself yet; how much less, then, such an immense property! I remember so well you once said of the king: "How is it possible to govern lands from the top of a mountain as high as Mont Blanc? for so high as the summit of Mont Blanc is above the plains, so high, nay even higher, is the throne above the people." You spoke truth, mother; but you forget to whom you were speaking. In a sense, I shall be a king. No one shall say of me, that I govern my people from the summit of a mountain-top, whence I could never know their feelings, their joys, or their sorrows. Before I take this position, before I sit on my throne, I will travel amongst my fellow-creatures, become acquainted with their condition; and then, perhaps, some day, I shall be able to make my dependants hap-

pier. Do you understand me, mother? Say that you understand me; for, if you do not, no one in all the world ever will.'

She smiled sadly.

'Yes, I think I understand you, Nils,' she answered; 'but have you really thought out your plan? Do you not think God places every one where he is best fitted for his work? Are you sure that it is right to leave one's own appointed place to seek another where one is not called?'

'I shall, I hope, return to my own place, mother, and shall be worthier then of the position than I am now. Mother, if I remain here I shall not be what I want to be, or what your son ought to be. My passionate temper and my proud nature, incline me to become a self-willed tyrant. Mother dear, that you would never wish me to become. And one thing more. This is a great trust; and one day I must leave an accurate account of everything for my successor. Oh! I am resolved never to be a poor, weak, useless cipher, living my life through without giving assistance to those about me. Our hopes are constantly directed to those who will follow us. Present efforts prepare for future victories; therefore

I will work now, and, by struggling, will acquire strength to triumph over difficulties. But I am not yet ready nor fit for the combat. Were we in the good old times I would become a wandering knight, and protect the helpless. Now ——'

'Well! and now?'

'Now I will go into the world, and try to subdue myself; teaching myself to obey and depend upon my fellow-men.'

'My poor Nils!' said his mother; 'it is not necessary to go so far to learn that—but do as you think best. How long do you intend remaining away?'

'That I cannot yet tell. Perhaps one—perhaps three years. But will you give your consent, my darling mother?'

'My consent does not seem necessary to my tall, powerful son,' she answered. 'But we will reflect on our present conversation, and then you can tell me of your intentions.'

He was silent, went back to the window, and stood there, thinking deeply. His mother sat still by the stove, trying to calm herself. It was a hard struggle for her, and called all her strength of purpose into action. She had devoted her

entire life to the education of her son; and now a sacrifice was demanded of her—a sacrifice she was not prepared to make at the moment.

All that constant watching and care could do for him she had done. Her duty now was, not to watch over him, but to allow him to watch over himself.

She was conscious that even *this* she could do for her son; but she felt intensely that, if she did, it would be the strongest proof of affection she could give him. Whilst he remained over by the window, the interval was to her a time of severe trial.

Some days after, Nils told his mother that by the aid of his old tutor he had obtained the situation of tutor in one of the noble families of Central Sweden.

He had often heard that tutors and governesses had much to endure; he therefore hoped, by placing himself in a like position, to learn—what his character so needed—humility, and thought for others.

In accepting this situation he adopted the plebeian name of his forefathers before they were ennobled, judging by this means that he would

be exposed to all the humiliations and crosses he pictured to himself a tutor had to endure in a nobleman's family.

The young heir's fate in the fulfilment of this extreme and romantic plan will be seen in the following story.

CHAPTER II.

BREAKFAST AT HAFNÄS.

THE breakfast-room at Hafnäs was sunny and bright. It lay in a corner of the somewhat old-fashioned mass of buildings, and occupied the entire first floor of the tower. Where the loop-holes had been in ancient times, a large, beautiful window had been hewn out of the immensely thick walls on three different sides, and each window-recess was so deep it formed in itself a snug little room. From one window could be seen the Baltic, far as the eye could reach. From another the flower-garden and one corner of the lake, beyond which lay the park, and that portion of the beautiful forest which belonged to Hafnäs. The third window gave a view of the land side and courtyard; also of the beautiful linden avenue which stretched up to the gates of the grand entrance to Castle Hafnäs.

One lovely June morning in 186–, about half-

past ten, the family at Hafnäs sat at breakfast in this room. An empty seat here and there showed that some members of the family were absent; but that was not unusual in Hafnäs, as each came down there when he pleased.

Fröken[1] Signe Lilienrooth, a young lady of seventeen, sat at the head of the table, pouring out tea and coffee, and chatting at the same time with her brother, a boy about ten, who was sitting next her, eating a basin of bread and milk. On her other side was a very tall old gentleman with a prominent nose and grey hair. He was apparently occupied with his breakfast, but at times his behaviour indicated decided absence of mind. For example, whilst stirring his coffee and eating his food an absent look would come over his face; the noise of his moving jaws, which had given audible proof for some time past that his breakfast was being attended to, would cease; his hand would be lifted, his mouth would open, and the piece intended for the next mouthful would remain half way between his plate and his lips. His expressionless eyes, staring about, proved that the

[1] 'Fröken' is the Swedish title for all unmarried ladies of noble birth. It can be employed with or without the name, at the option of the speaker.—TRANS.

man was no longer present; his body sat still at the breakfast table, but his spirit was far away. Those who knew Dr. Bogarius best generally had an idea of what occupied his thoughts. His mind at such times was frequently in Greece; sometimes on the shores of Tiberius; sometimes before the walls of Troy.

He imagined he could attend to two things at once—eat his breakfast, and continue the classical train of thought which the summons to the family meal had disturbed. Sometimes he was successful; sometimes not.

If his brain was not quite clear on one point, if a link was wanting in the train of his reasoning, then everything else was put aside till the point was cleared up or the missing link found, and the machinery of his brain at work again without any hindrance.

It was not always, however, that the good doctor was perfectly oblivious to what was going on around him. At times he showed himself quite able, not only to ask but to answer any question connected with the conversation, as we shall soon discover. But such an engaging of his attention must not be lost; for, if anything

worried him, he would again become as absent as possible, and for that time, at least, all hope of his further attention was gone.

Dr. Bogarius had once been the late Count's tutor, and, after a few years spent as master in a public school, he had returned to the home of his former pupil, where he enjoyed the peace and quiet his advancing years and growing absence of mind required.

He was beloved by all the family at Hafnäs, and he interested himself in all that concerned them as much as possible.

Next to the doctor at the breakfast table sat Henrik Lilienrooth, a young man about twenty, with regular features, and very fair hair, and blue eyes.

'Signe,' said Henrik, 'has Carlos told you anything of what he did in Stockholm?'

'No, scarcely anything,' answered Signe. 'He was so anxious about his farming that he has only had time to speak to the bailiff and the dairy-maid, I believe, since he came home.' She smiled, and then added, 'But here he comes. You can ask him.'

She must have known his step—for the door

had not yet opened, and she sat with her back to it.

A moment after a young man, about five-and-twenty, entered the room. It was Count Carlos Falkenheim, joint heir with his sister Beatrice of Hafnäs Castle and lands, one of the largest estates in the province.

At the first glance, one saw that he was dark; at the next, that he was not very tall; but at the third, one came to the conclusion that he was remarkably handsome.

'Good morning,' said he, as he took his seat. A very slight accent in his speech told that he had been much abroad. 'Good morning, friends. This is indeed a rare pleasure for me to breakfast with you all together. I wonder how it happens! It's not my fault, I know. Have you any fixed hour for the meal? for, if you have, I have never been able to find it out.'

His black eyes danced with fun, as he gave them a glance of defiance all round the table. Signe was the one who answered in the same bantering tone—

'Yes, dear Carlos; we know it's not your

fault, and, if needful, Athanase can certify it. Fröken von Claaken told me that when you first came home she was anxious to fall in with your habits, so she asked your Swiss servant at what hour you breakfasted.'

'Well, and what did Athanase answer? If he did not swear that I was the most orderly fellow in Europe, I will send him off to-morrow. You have his fate in your hands, Signe!'

'Athanase answered, "Monsieur le Comte breakfasts at any hour between four in the morning and two in the afternoon; but never at the same hour two days following." Fröken von Claaken believed Athanase was exaggerating, and bade her maid wake her very early the next morning, that she might breakfast with you. The next morning she woke at four. At first she thought from the noise that the house was on fire; but, on inquiry, she was told that the young Count's morning meal was being prepared for half-past four! She dressed in haste; but, just as she entered the room, she saw you stuff a packet of sandwiches into the pocket of your hunting coat, and disappear through the other door—so that her early rising had been quite useless. Two or three mornings

she did the same, but she was always too early or too late. At last she gave up in despair. Athanase was quite right when he said your breakfast hour was between four and two.'

Everyone laughed at Carlos, but he was indifferent to it. Presently, looking up, he saw Signe's youngest brother staring at him with laughing eyes and wide-open mouth.

'Ah! so *you* laugh at me too, do you, Gustaf? Well, wait a while, and I will be revenged on you.' '*Apropos*, Henrik,' he added, 'I have forgotten to tell you that I executed your commission in Stockholm, and I have procured a tutor for Gustaf.'

'A tutor!' exclaimed the boy; and all his fun changed into curiosity.

'Certainly, certainly; why not?' was heard from Dr. Bogarius. His attention had been aroused at the word 'tutor;' and he expressed in this way his intention of taking part in what should follow.

'Yes,' continued Carlos with affected gravity; 'the family had decided that Gustaf required a tutor to keep him in order; also to teach him not to laugh at older folk.'

He handed his cup to Signe to be filled, and then added—

'When I was last in Stockholm, I went to see the rector Skolman, who was my master the short time I went to school, and whom I think a very distinguished man. I asked him if he could recommend me a suitable tutor for a tiresome boy (here he gave a nod at Gustaf) of about ten? He thought a little while, and then said he would write me an answer very soon. This morning I had a letter from him.'

'Well?' said every one at once, eagerly.

'Well, he thinks he has found one who will just do—one of his former pupils. I think he must have been a favourite, for the rector writes he thinks very highly of him. Would any one like to hear what he says?'

'Certainly, certainly; why not?' broke out Bogarius with more than usual interest; 'of course his testimonials are of the highest order?'

'Well, I will read—but I must jump to the middle of the letter:—"I believe I have been very fortunate in obtaining for you, Herr Count, and the young lad, a person I can highly recommend; and I am quite persuaded that the boy

himself will experience great benefit and much pleasure during the hours he studies under such a master."' Carlos laid down the letter.

'Does the letter say nothing about the young man's learning, or in what special way his knowledge shows itself?' asked the doctor.

'Yes, of course—here it is. "His classical knowledge is deep and extensive; his mathematics good; and"—but you shall read the letter through for yourself, doctor. But here, Henrik, is a bit specially for you. "If a warm, good heart, irreproachable conduct, and firm religious principles make a man fit and worthy to educate youth, then I have the greatest and warmest pleasure in introducing this, my former pupil, into your house and family." Now, there is a model for you!' added Carlos, as he went on with his breakfast. 'When I first read the letter, I hoped on to the end that there would be something about his being a good hunter, or that he liked fishing or something in my way. But the good rector says not a word about either. You have all got something but me. For a moment I thought of writing back, "Of no use, unless he can at least play billiards."'

'Yes,' said Signe, laughing. 'What can the rector have been thinking about to leave out such an important subject! But what do you mean by saying we have all "got something." What have I got, as you call it?'

'Did I not read that? Where is the letter? Oh, I remember the words,' he continued, with gravity in his tone. '"He is the only son of his mother, and she is a widow." Now, Signe, won't he be a very great favourite with you and Elfva? But I have forgotten to ask you, how is Elfva to-day?'

Elfva was Signe's youngest sister. She was always ill, and on her back, from a fall when a child. The reader will soon make her acquaintance.

'Well! you have told us neither his name nor when we are to expect this new tutor,' said Henrik to Carlos.

'When is he to come? Ah! at any time, perhaps to-day,' answered Carlos. 'And his name is, I believe, Nordén; but the Doctor has the letter.'

Dr. Bogarius had taken the letter, and was studying it very carefully for the purpose of find-

ing out as much as possible of the new tutor's classical learning.

'His name is Nils Nordén,' answered the Doctor, when the question was repeated. 'That sounds to me rather learned,' added he, as he put up his spectacles and gazed at a corner of the ceiling. 'Let me see. I once knew two men of the same name who were wonderful classics—Nils Nordén! —I wonder if he is any relative of that clever archdeacon, Nordén of Bubbarp—he *must* be—but I will ask him at once. Where is this young man?'

Entirely taken up with this idea, the Doctor rose from the table and left the room with the air of a man who expected to find him in the hall, or somewhere about.

Every one had finished breakfast. Fröken von Claaken had not been down this morning, as she was suffering from an attack of toothache, and had her coffee in her room.

This old lady was a distant relative of the family, and had been years before invited by Carlos' father to come and give his motherless girls the womanly care they so much needed after the death of the Countess. Carlos and Beatrice were

sister and brother, the children of Count Falkenheim by his first wife, a noble Spanish lady whom he had married during his travels in Spain when a young man. After a few years of great happiness, his wife died, leaving him two children, Carlos, whose acquaintance we have made, and Beatrice, his sister, six years younger. A year or two after, their father married again, and his second wife was his cousin, the Baroness Lilienrooth, a widow with four children, Henrik, Signe, Elfva, and Gustaf.

No relationship existed between her four children and his two, except that their parents were cousins; consequently, the children were second cousins.

The second Countess Falkenheim died about three years before our tale begins. Her husband had always loved and cared for his step-children, and when he died, about two years after, he left in his will strict injunctions that they were to live on at Hafnäs, and still consider themselves as brothers and sisters to his own children. Fröken von Claaken managed the house, and took the place of mother to the girls as well as she could. But to return to our story.

As Carlos left the breakfast-room, he advised Signe to let Fröken von Claaken know of the approaching arrival of the new tutor.

On the stairs he met Gustaf.

'Hallo! youngster. What do you say to my getting you a new tutor?'

The boy looked up cheerfully, answering,

'That you shall know when I have seen him,' and he was running off when Carlos called after him.

'Listen to me. If you go and ask Jonson what I brought with me from Stockholm, you will find it was not *only* a tutor.'

The boy sprang up the stairs again with a cry of joy as Carlos said, 'My compliments to Mr. Trot.' Mr. Trot was Gustaf's pony, and Carlos had brought him a beautiful new saddle.

Carlos turned off to seek his sister Beatrice. He went slowly along the corridor till he came to a beautiful little polished oak staircase covered with Indian matting.

Six or seven steps led to a landing where was a window which overlooked the lake, and a few steps farther up was a door, which opened into the private apartments of his sister Beatrice. There was another approach to them through

the drawing and dining-rooms, but that way was rarely used. Passing through the outer apartment, one came to an inner one, which was the same shape as the breakfast-room, though not quite so large. This was Beatrice's boudoir, where she generally sat, and where she often had her breakfast by herself, as she had this morning.

It was not surprising that she liked to be here, for the apartment was bright and sunny, and was furnished with every luxury the most fastidious taste could desire. Like the breakfast-room, it had a beautiful view of the lake.

A door on one side led into her sleeping chamber; on the other was a lovely little conservatory, full of flowers, whose fragrance filled the air.

A third door, with a curtain before it, opened on a curiously contrived flight of steps, which led to the garden; so that whenever Beatrice fancied, she could pass this way to the shores of the lake.

When Carlos reached the boudoir he found Beatrice absent, but looking through the door of the conservatory he saw his sister busy with her plants, an employment which occupied a considerable portion of the young lady's time.

'Good morning, dear Carlos,' she said, as he advanced to greet her, still going on with her work. 'Will you sit here, or shall we go inside? I have just finished.'

'Go on, sister mine,' gaily answered her brother as he looked round for a place to sit down. 'But what is the use of inviting me to take a seat when there is nothing to sit on?'

'Yes, there is,' she said. 'Lift down that orange tree from off the iron stool, and then you can sit on that quite well, or, if you like better, fetch a chair from inside."

Carlos looked at the heavy pot, and then at his white hands, and determined to fetch the chair. But when he stepped out of the conservatory, it struck him that if the door stood open they could hear each other very well, whilst he sat in an arm-chair; moreover, he could smoke here, which Beatrice would not allow in the conservatory.

'I want to talk to you about business,' began Carlos, 'although I know you hate it.'

'If it is *very* necessary, I suppose I am obliged to listen,' she answered from behind her flowers. 'But come here and look at this lovely bud on my exotic.'

'Thank you, I am afraid the smoke will do it no good,' said Carlos. 'Really, Beatrice, you ought to know where your money comes from.'

'Oh! that does not trouble me at all,' she answered. 'I should have to listen to a heap of disagreeable things that would put me in a bad humour for the rest of the day. I am quite sure, dear Carlos, you manage it all splendidly, and I shall not be of age[1] for six years yet, so there is time enough, I am sure.'

Carlos smoked on without immediately answering. He was really very anxious his sister should take some interest in their mutual money affairs, and was determined to give her a little scolding for her careless indifference, and disregard to his wishes.

'My dear sister, listen to me,' . . . he began, but could get no further, for a delicious nosegay was held on his mouth, and Beatrice stood before him.

'Is not *that* more interesting than stupid business? Have you nothing else to tell me? You have hardly said a word of what you did in Stockholm. How is Aunt Adelaide?'

[1] In Sweden a woman is not of age till five and twenty.

Carlos saw it was of no use to try any more; his sister was not in the humour to discuss money matters, so he let her have her own way, and talk of other things.

Beatrice was what circumstances had made her. Accustomed always to have her own way, with a rich southern nature, without one curb but her own good feeling, she was just at that age when she needed most, kind careful guidance to develope her character, and make it most beautiful. She was a charming girl, charming in her beauty, her grace, and her sprightliness; but with the deepest and best part of her nature as yet unroused by one storm from without. She had been much with her aunt Adelaide, her father's sister, and with her had enjoyed the gaieties of one winter in Stockholm. But her aunt Adelaide had, like every one else, thoroughly spoilt her, and allowed her to have her own way without any restraint. The brother and sister loved each other very dearly. Their characters in many respects were alike, though Carlos, through having been abroad in the world, and becoming so young the head of the family, was naturally much more matured, for his age, than his sister.

At first, Beatrice was not very pleased when her brother told her of the new arrangement about the tutor.

'Was it necessary?' she asked. 'Could not the Doctor teach Gustaf?'

'How can you think of such a thing! Why, it would make the boy twice as tiresome as he is if he learned his lessons with anyone so absent-minded. Besides, I would not allow the old man to take any such trouble.'

'Well, Henrik, then. I thought he was going to teach him?'

'It was suggested once, but Henrik has to read up for his own examination, so has no time. Besides, I think this plan of a tutor the best.'

'Well,' answered Beatrice, 'I suppose it can't be helped; but it won't be pleasant to have a stranger always amongst us. I suppose he will take his meals with us?'

'Take his meals with us!' exclaimed Carlos, 'Why, of course! What kind of thing do you take a tutor for? a bird, or a fish? Really, Beatrice, you are too absurd. Tell me, have you ever seen a tutor? do you know how he looks?'

'You shall see in a moment,' she answered

hastily going to her writing table and taking pencil and paper and beginning to draw. 'I once went with Aunt Adelaide to Upsala to hear the students sing, and I remember quite well how they all looked. This new tutor is a student also, I suppose? Look here, it's just finished. See, there is the white cap and fair straight hair, the coat loose on the shoulders and close up round the throat as far as the necktie, a cigar in mouth, and stick in hand!' She finished her sketch, and wrote underneath 'Mr. N. N., a flower of Swedish youth.' 'That is how your new tutor will look.'

Carlos burst out laughing.

'But why have you put those initials,' asked he, as his sister was looking at her caricature. 'Have I told you his name?'

'No, but I wrote N. N., as I see every one does when the name is not known. But that's enough of the tutor. We shall have more than we want of him quite soon enough, I have no doubt. What are you going to do to-day?'

'Signe has promised to ride with me to Sjötorpet; she intends riding Viola. Henrik has no

time to go with us. Will you give us the pleasure of your company? We start at half-past twelve.'

She looked at him and smiled. 'Thank you, dear boy, it's very kind of you to invite me, but I won't come to-day. See here, give this red carnation to Signe—it will be a pretty ornament in her black habit. Perhaps I shall come down and see you ride off; if not, a pleasant ride to you both.'

Carlos went away, and she stood for a moment watching him descend the stairs; then went back to her morning-room, and took up a piece of work she was doing for her aunt Adelaide. As she sat in one of the low easy chairs scattered about, half facing the window, her eyes wandered with a dreamy expression towards the white sails dotted here and there out on the sea beyond the lake glistening in the dazzling sunlight.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW TUTOR.

ABOUT one o'clock of the day on which the foregoing conversation took place, an ordinary post-chaise entered the long linden avenue which led to the Castle. Instead of driving up to the entrance gates, it stopped at one of the turnings, and a young man stepped out of it. The first thing he did was to give his legs a good stretch, for judging from their length they must have been doubled up in the little carriage. Then, after taking his knapsack from the seat, he paid the driver, gave him a pleasant word, and started towards the Castle.

'Good luck to you,' called out after him the driver, who seemed to have taken a fancy to the young man, who answered with a nod and a smile. 'It must be the new tutor up there at the big house. I've heard tell as they was going to have one; but he don't look very larned, anyhow

not a bit like that old Bogarius, and he's the only tutor I ever set eyes on in my life,' added the driver to himself as he mounted his seat and drove back.

As the young man walked along the beautiful avenue, he stopped every now and then to look around him. He seemed in no hurry to reach the Castle; on the contrary, he enjoyed the use of his legs after their long and tedious imprisonment. At the hall door the footman told him, in answer to his question if the family were at home, that the Count had ridden out, that he did not know if Fröken Beatrice was at home, but that he would tell Fröken von Claaken. 'What name shall I say?'

'Mr. Nordén,' answered the young man, as he followed the footman into the breakfast-room.

He had stood a few moments looking out of the window, when Fröken von Claaken hastily entered. She was a short, stout, healthy-looking little body, with grey hair and a pleasant face, and had her head wrapped up in a handkerchief on account of her toothache. Any hasty movement always put her out of breath, and she was

some moments in the room before she could recover herself sufficiently to talk. She then warmly welcomed Nordén, begged him to excuse his room not being prepared, and told him it was Carlos' fault, for he had not informed her of the expected arrival till just an hour ago; but it should be ready soon, if he would not mind waiting a little. 'Amuse yourself by looking about,' added the little lady, after chatting to him for a time; and then she rose and left the room. Puff, puff, puff, was heard all up the stairs, and Nordén, with a smile on his lips, could not help listening—it sounded so very peculiar.

An hour passed by, during which Nordén admired the view from the windows, looked at the books on the table, at the prints and albums scattered about, and tried to occupy himself as well as he could; but at last he began to feel impatient, and was thinking of going down to the garden, when it struck him he would accept Fröken von Claaken's permission and look about him. He rose, and opening a door by the side of the stove, he found himself in a large lofty suite of apartments beautifully furnished in the old-fashioned style. From the ceilings hung

huge, massive, odd-shaped chandeliers; the walls were covered with paintings; and the high stoves were of white porcelain, ornamented at the top with grotesque figures of rare and peculiar workmanship. The high backs to the chairs were beautifully carved, each bearing the family crest, and the seats, like the couches, sofas, and curtains, were of the richest satin, but faded and worn, and of old-fashioned shape; and there was an air of coldness and formality about the furniture which gave one the impression the family were not much in the habit of using these rooms.

He wandered about, now looking out of one window, now out of another, to observe if the view was always the same. Then he turned to the pictures, and criticised some of the old family portraits, but soon tiring of such an uninteresting amusement, he opened a door at the end of one of the drawing-rooms, and, as he did so, a sweet perfume of flowers seemed to fill the air around him. He stepped forward, and found himself close by the open door of a pretty little conservatory. He went in, but hardly had he done so, when he saw before him a picture which riveted him to the spot. He knew he ought to

go back, but if it had cost him his life he could not have moved.

On a low easy chair in the room before him sat a beautiful girl. She was fast asleep. Her head rested on the back of her chair; her eyelids were closed, and the long black eyelashes curled on her cheek. Her hair was simply arranged, but one coal black tress had slipped from its fastening, and hung on her shoulder, gently moving to and fro with each breath of wind from the open window. A piece of tapestry work lay on her lap, its bright colours in the glowing sunshine forming a brilliant contrast to the black mourning dress she wore, telling, too, what she was doing when sleep overcame her.

It was no wonder Nordén put his hand to his head, and murmured:

'Beautiful, beautiful! It's enchantment—fairy-land. Am I awake, or am I dreaming?'

How long he stood there he never knew, but suddenly a gust of wind through the window blew a paper from the table almost to his feet. He instinctively picked it up, and the next moment the spell was broken. He saw in his hand an extravagant ridiculous sketch of a student, and written underneath, 'Mr. N. N., a flower of

Swedish youth.' A few moments after, Fröken von Claaken found the new tutor in the breakfast-room where she had left him, and told him that his room was quite ready, and his knapsack carried up there.

Fröken von Claaken had received Nordén kindly because she was naturally good-natured and amiable; but she had not done it quite willingly. When Signe told her that Carlos had found a tutor for Gustaf, she involuntarily began to wonder what he would be like. She had seen so little of the world, mixed so very rarely in society since her youthful days, that her experience was very limited in many things. Until she came to Hafnäs to be a mother to the motherless girls, she had rarely left the distant village she had made her home. When her father died, and left her with an income ample enough for her simple wants, but far too small to allow her the luxuries of a town life or the pleasure of visiting amongst her richer friends, she had lived away from the world, happy in her work, her garden, and the poor around her, seeing none of her noble relatives, and quite unconscious that

as time passed on changes were made in the world, and many of the habits and customs of her youth had quite disappeared, and new ones come in their place.

As she sat wondering and thinking about the new tutor, her thoughts went back to her girlhood some forty years before, when her brothers, now long since dead, were at home, and had had a tutor to read with them. The picture her memory brought before her was that of a pale unhappy-looking man, full of Greek and Latin, with no appetite, and always dressed in a threadbare tight coat, huge white necktie, and plain black hat. She remembered he was coldly treated by the family, neglected by the servants, and always in love with the governess. Unfortunately, this was her only experience on this head, and the little old lady came to the conclusion that all who held such a position *must* look the same, dress the same, and have the same faults and the same peculiarities as the one she had known so many years before. It was, therefore, very natural that her prejudices were a little shocked when, instead of the pale, shy, shabbily-dressed individual she had expected to meet, a tall, handsome, well-

dressed man, in a loose, fashionable, morning coat stood before her, speaking easily and quietly, without one shade of embarrassment or awkwardness in his manner. His light summer hat he had laid on the table, was in her ideas more fit for an Italian bandit than a well-conducted tutor entering for the first time his employer's house.

One thing she was very thankful for: there was no governess in the house, so there could be no lovemaking.

Fröken von Claaken, in a word, was not quite pleased with her first interview. Neither could she conceal from herself that her acquaintance with Mr. Nordén had been made under rather trying circumstances. She had, as we said before, received him kindly; but she somehow felt that the interview had not been such as she meant it to be.

She had not for one moment thought of taking off the handkerchief which was wrapped around her head, a circumstance which proved in itself her ideas of how a tutor should be treated; but now she felt she had made a mistake, and that it would have been better if the handkerchief had been left up-stairs.

'He is much too tall,' she answered, when

Signe asked her how she liked him. 'It makes one's neck ache to talk to him; and he has a hat like a brigand's.'

Perfectly unconscious of having caused the old lady any pain, Nordén went up to his room and began to arrange his things. He took off his coat, and began to unpack, but he could not bring his mind to his work; his thoughts wandered off to the picture he had seen before him in the conservatory. 'Very odd,' he said to himself; 'I have hardly been here half an hour, and there is already a caricature made of me—or rather that *must* have been done beforehand. Well, I must say, it's better, if it was to be done at all, that it should be done before she saw me.' And he smiled to himself with a touch of satisfaction. 'But how am I sure *she* did it? The only proof I have is in the expression I saw round her mouth as she slept—satire and irony lurked there, only for the moment at rest. Besides, more than that, the portrait flew straight towards me, as if she herself had thrown it; for a second I thought she had awoke, and that was her reply to my boldness in daring to be there at all, as if she had said, "Come no nearer, you poor, humble tutor;

you have dared to look at me, now look at yourself. Such you are in my eyes, whatever you may be in your own." She must be Fröken Beatrice, the Count's own sister. She is just what that loquacious driver told me—a "tremendously grand young lady, with hair black and shining like coal," and with eyes that pierce one through and through, when she looks at any one but her brother, and she likes to do nothing all day but attend to her flowers and stitch embroidery. So now, my noble-born dame, I have a sketch of you, though it has not been done by quite such fair, lily-white hands!'

It was very evident that the absurd little sketch which had fallen so strangely into his hands had annoyed Nordén; and not being enough of a philosopher to like being laughed at by a beautiful young girl, it made him feel cross and out of humour. However, before he went down to dinner, he had quite recovered his good temper. Carlos had been to see him, had given him a very warm welcome, asked him if he had everything in his room that he required, and received him more like a visitor than one holding the position of tutor.

This was just the sort of thing Carlos always did. He had strong aristocratic prejudices, and was by nature a very proud man; but he rarely showed either, and, in his reception of Nordén, he would have been angry with any one who had hinted even that his manner need not have been quite so friendly, or his desire to make the tutor at once feel at home in his family, too eager.

When Nordén went down to dinner the whole family were together in the drawing-room. At a glance he saw that the episode of the morning had been no dream, no creation of his own fancy, but that the girl he had seen fast asleep in the sunlit room was sitting there before his eyes, only awake and in a different dress. Carlos introduced him to each individual present; but when he said, 'my sister Beatrice,' and she rose and fixed her beautiful black eyes on him for a moment, Nordén thought he saw an expression pass over her face as if something amused her—perhaps she thought of her sketch—but it vanished as quickly as it came, and she received his deep bow with a friendly smile and gentle inclination

The conversation at dinner was lively and amusing, but poor Nordén had fallen a victim to Dr. Bogarius, who had seized upon him as a fox does on a chicken, and, as Nordén sat next to him, he began to talk to him on subjects he supposed must interest them both. He began by asking if he was related to an Archdeacon Nordén in Bubbarp, who had gone lately to reside in Skania. But in spite of Nordén's assurance that he was not, the old Doctor seemed to enjoy his new neighbour's conversation immensely, if one could judge from the continual repetition of his favourite word 'certainly, certainly,' when he was pleased. Presently a remark of Nordén's on the poet Æschylus set the Doctor off on a train of thought which made him forget to talk, and thus gave Nordén a chance of listening to the animated discussion going on at the other end of the table. The morning's ride was evidently the cause of dispute, for Signe was saying she could manage her reins much better when Carlos let her hold them as she liked, and that her horse was restive because Carlos took the reins so often into his own hands to show her how to hold them.

'But *everything* depends upon the reins—it's

the secret of all good riding,' said Carlos, 'and specially so for a lady. Is that not true, Mr. Nordén?' he added, as he saw the tutor was listening to the conversation.

'Yes, indeed! You are quite right—at least,' he interrupted himself, 'so riding-masters always say.'

Dr. Bogarius looked up with astonishment and displeasure in his countenance. He had been, as usual, in Greece, and imagined Nordén had been with him till the last remark had woke him from his reverie, and made him wonder what Nordén could mean.

'Excuse me, sir, but you said in 3rd Act, 2nd Scene, the words ran' . . .

'I wonder,' said Carlos to Signe, when Nordén no longer was listening to them, 'if he has ever been on a horse. Perhaps he has had a few lessons, as he quotes the riding-master. Dear me! and he can't play billiards,' sighed Carlos in a most melancholy voice.

What! Have you already asked him?' exclaimed Signe.

'Yes, of course I did; and I thought he answered me rather shortly that he "never played billiards."'

'"So much the worse for you, you duffer," I thought, but did not say. Beatrice is in a very listening humour to-day, Signe,' he added after a pause. 'Why, she has not said one word all dinner-time! I wonder if she and the old lady have been having a squabble again!'

CHAPTER IV.

CHAMBERLAIN SCHWARYENCRONA'S VISIT TO HAFNÄS.

JUDGING from the appearance of Hafnäs, one would have thought that the owners of so many broad lands were very rich, but this was not the case.

Some years before, Carlos' father, the old Count, had required a large sum of ready money to carry out some speculations he had in hand. To obtain this sum he mortgaged his lands at a heavy interest.

Time passed on, his speculation failed, and he found it a difficult matter to repay his loan. In his distress he borrowed again, and then again, and when he died his affairs were in a state of almost hopeless entanglement.

Carlos was neither profuse nor extravagant, but with a generous nature, quite unaccustomed to business, and brought up in every possible luxury, he was not exactly the sort of man to overcome the difficulties in which his father's thoughtlessness had involved him. He knew his father had

left many debts, and that the property was somehow not so valuable as it might be; but, unless obliged, he rarely allowed himself to be worried about business, and, on the whole, preferred to let things take their course, rather than exert himself to avert the trouble, which he had a dim sort of notion was impending. Among the late Count's business friends was a person called Schwaryencrona, an elderly unmarried man, who, when young, had been an officer in the army, and also for some short time one of the king's chamberlains.

It was thought, and correctly, that he was very rich, but his reputation was not of the best. His business dealings were, to say the least, selfish and hard, and it was whispered about town that he had large sums of money lent at usurious rates, which brought him in enormous gains. In appearance he was a pleasant man. The late Count liked him very much, and it was generally supposed that the Chamberlain was the one who had lent the Count the large sum we spoke of, with or without security. About two years before, at the time the old Count was suffering from the illness which terminated in his death, the Cham-

berlain determined in his own mind he would like to obtain Beatrice for his wife. What sort of love he had for her, a girl of seventeen, it would be difficult to say; but certain it is he did all he could to win her, and when he was refused by both father and daughter it made him very angry, though he did not lose all hope of ultimately gaining his object. He only waited till a favourable opportunity should occur, and then he meant to try his fortune again.

One beautiful day, Mr. Schwaryencrona's carriage drove up to Hafnäs. Nordén, who was just at the same moment going out with his pupil, asked the boy who that tall, grey-haired man was.

'Oh! that is Chamberlain Schwaryencrona, of Bergstähr,' answered Gustaf. 'I don't like him, and I don't believe Carlos does, and I know Beatrice hates him.'

Although Nordén was very curious to ascertain the reason why, he did not care to question the boy, and it was not till some days later that he found out how Beatrice had refused him, and how angry Carlos had been that such an elderly man should dare to propose to his sister.

The Chamberlain was shown into Carlos' private room, which was on the first floor, and looked over the garden. The young Count received his visitor kindly but coldly, offered him a cigar, and asked him to sit down. The two men spoke for a time on farming, the weather, the coming harvest, and such subjects as interested them both. Presently the conversation turning on money, the Chamberlain said,

'It's terribly sad to hear of so many becoming bankrupt lately, and men, too, one had considered as safe as possible. Why, there is that man at Bjerby—how much, do you think, my lord Count, he owed?'

'I have no idea. How much?'

'1,200,000 rixdalers! Think of that! 1,200,000! Is it not terrible? And he was thought to be one of the richest men in the province, and now he is worth nothing, and has nothing.'

'Poor fellow!' said Carlos only, for the subject was not agreeable to him, and he wished to put an end to it. But it was of no use; the Chamberlain would take no hint, but went on.

'There are several others in the same case. And between ourselves there is ——'

'Don't you think it better I should not know about the affairs of other people?' interrupted Carlos, for he knew full well that 'between ourselves' meant also between numbers of other people.

'Of course, just as you like, just as you like. Hm—hm,' answered the Chamberlain.

And then there was a pause. Mr. Schwaryencrona evidently had something to say, which he found it difficult to bring out. He did not exactly know how to begin, or what to say first, so he sat and puffed away at his cigar in silence. Carlos stood by the writing-table playing with a riding-whip he held in his hand, whisking at the flies.

'Yes,' began the Chamberlain again, 'these are hard times—it's true, quite true. À propos, have you heard about the mortgage?'

Carlos left off playing with the whip, looked at his visitor, and said shortly,

'What mortgage?'

'I meant the three mortgages I had the pleasure of raising money on for the late Count, your father. I believe they come to about 75,000 rixdalers.'

'I don't know much about it,' said Carlos, in a

drier tone than before, for he did not choose to speak of his difficulties to a comparative stranger.

The Chamberlain hesitated a moment. Carlos' manner was not inviting. He then went on in a tone he meant to be hearty and confidential.

'Listen, Count Carlos, and excuse me if I speak openly to you. Your father was an old friend of mine, and when he was in trouble I helped him with money. Has it never crossed your mind that the mortgages on your estate must be paid?'

'Yes, of course," answered Carlos. 'But the interest is always paid, and those who hold the mortgages must wait.'

'But I lose too much on them,' quietly observed the Chamberlain.

'*You*?' exclaimed Carlos impatiently.

'Yes, *I*—let me explain——'

Carlos listened in painful silence whilst his visitor went through a long explanation in detail of how all the old debts and mortgages of the estate had passed into his hands. One thing only seemed clear to Carlos—he was in this man's power. Not only the claims on his pro-

perty, but everything he had, seemed to belong to the man before him, who could, at a moment's warning, ruin him and his sister Beatrice, and oblige them to sell Hafnäs to the first bidder. Their fate lay in his hands. Would he use his power, or would he not? Carlos said not one word, but his thoughts were full of agony as he stood listening to the threatened calamity then first placed before him. He continued silent for some time after the Chamberlain had ceased speaking.

Then Mr. Schwaryencrona said,

'I was able to give peace to your father before his death by telling him that if such a crisis arrived as this I would promise to help his children, and never urge my claim as long as I lived.'

It would be difficult to realise Carlos' feeling as he stood before the man who was giving him such great pain, but who evidently intended to be kind. Gratitude he could not feel or express, and he was angry with himself for being so unjust and cold towards the individual who was apparently influenced by such kindly sympathies. But the Chamberlain was too anxious to say what he

had in his heart, to be able to play his part well to the end.

'Now, good-bye, my lord Count,' he said, rising to go. 'It is a real pleasure to me to be able to help my friends;' and he shook Carlos' hand, and went towards the door. Turning round again, he added, 'I wonder if I might ask a little kindness of you?'

'After what has passed, it would be difficult for you to ask anything I had it in my power to grant that I would not do for you, Mr. Schwaryencrona,' answered Carlos, more warmly than he had yet spoken.

'"After what has passed!" Please don't say that, I beg. What I ask, is ——. You remember, Count Carlos, I once was bold enough to cast myself at Fröken Beatrice's feet. The answer I got, you know, of course. I have been hoping that perhaps time may have softened her, and she will ——. May I hope that you will just say a little word to her for me—I mean, you won't speak against me!'

He stopped suddenly as he saw the expression on the face in front of him. Carlos' fine features

looked as if they were chiselled in iron. Both men were silent a moment.

'Mr. Chamberlain,' Carlos began, 'it pains me that you should ask just the *only* thing I cannot do for you. In my sister's choice of a husband I have never allowed myself to exercise the least control over her; and to do that now, under the present circumstances, and for your advantage, is for me perfectly impossible. It would be as if I wished to sell my sister to you. I wonder, sir, that you do not consider such a request quite unsuitable.'

It would be useless to try and describe the haughty tone and manner in which this was said. All his proud and stately Spanish and Swedish forefathers would have been charmed could they have seen their descendant and representative at that moment.

The Chamberlain had not a word to answer. He saw he had made a grievous mistake, which he feared might mar all his plans. With a hasty 'Very well, very well,' the crestfallen man went out to his carriage. As soon as he was seated, he muttered between his teeth, 'Haughty, proud fool! you shall pay for this. You shall sell her yet,

and that much cheaper than I asked you to-day, as sure as my name is Göran Schwaryencrona.'

And the carriage rolled away with its burden of a disappointed, antiquated lover.

Carlos was unusually grave and quiet the rest of the day; after that, the disagreeable impression of the Chamberlain's visit wore off. The young Count was not disposed to think about future dangers. Clouds black as night might hang over his head, but as long as there was one streak or ray of sunshine to brighten the sky, he was hopeful that the clouds would pass by, and the sun shine forth again as beautiful as ever. All remained, therefore, as usual at Hafnäs. Not a thing was altered, not one retrenchment made, and the world outside had no idea that at any moment the family at Hafnäs Castle could be driven from their old home out into the wide world without a penny, and that at the will of only one man—Chamberlain Göran Schwaryencrona. Carlos did ask himself sometimes if it would not be right to retrench a little in the household expenses, sell his numerous horses, or something of that kind. 'But that is of no use; it's 75,000 I want, not one, two, or three. It would take me

twenty-five years at least to raise such a sum, and so long Schwaryencrona will not wait. By saving a few thousands a year we should have much discomfort, and gain nothing in the end, besides ruining my credit.' And so he reasoned. And many, both before and after him, have taken and will take a similar course.

CHAPTER V.

FRÖKEN VON CLAAKEN AGAINST NORDÉN.

A FEW weeks went by, in which Gustaf fell well into the routine of his lessons. Besides his daily reading in the school-room, Nordén took Gustaf with him for long walks, in which they botanised, scrambled after birds'-nests, bathed, and did all kinds of pleasant things Fröken von Claaken called 'tricks.' Her displeasure arose from the fact that Gustaf often came home with his clothes 'looking disgraceful.' Either he had been in a boggy field, when he and Nordén had tried to find a new way through the forest, and he had not taken Nordén's advice to try the turf before putting both feet on; or he had been scrambling up a tree, or some such similar thing. The little old lady spoke at last to his elder brothers and sister, and told them they ought to speak to Nordén about taking care which road he went; and also

about his own and Gustaf's clothes. But she did not get much sympathy from them.

'You can't clip their wings as easily as you can domestic fowls, my sweet aunt,' said Carlos, giving her the pet name they all called her by. And Henrik thought the same, and said so, adding to Signe,

'Try and get the boy some tough clothes to wear, and if they tear, it does not matter. It does Gustaf more good to ramble about with Nordén than it does his clothes harm.'

'And he himself is just as bad, when he comes home, as the boy, which is far worse,' said the old lady; 'and I think it's very unreasonable of him. Twice running I have seen a big hole in that sugar-loaf hat of his; and who mended it I don't know, for I asked Anna, and she says she didn't.'

The old lady was very much astonished, and very angry, when Henrik quietly said,

'A few days ago I happened by chance to be talking to Nordén, when the messenger from town brought him a parcel from Stockholm. "It's only a summer hat in reserve," he said to me, as he opened it and showed it me, as soon as the messenger had gone.'

'A "summer hat in reserve!"' exclaimed Fröken von Claaken, 'why, he talks as if he had a ton of gold a day. I have heard that young men now-a-days deny themselves nothing; and if they haven't money, they borrow it. I dare say he is over head and ears in debt, like all the rest of you. But I won't allow it,' added the little lady, growing warmer as she spoke; 'I won't allow it. The poor boy will ruin himself with summer hats. He will spend the whole of his salary on hats, at this rate. He has no father, and his mother is not here to look after him, so I shall just take the liberty of talking to him myself.'

And she went off on the spur of the moment to find Nordén, and give him a bit of her mind. The brothers and sisters laughed aloud as the sound of the usual puff, puff, died away in the distance.

'Our friend Nils will catch it this time,' said Henrik. 'I wonder what fate the bandit hat will have?'

'Oh, there's no danger,' answered Carlos. 'I'll bet two to one Nordén wins the day. Will you have a wager with me, Signe?'

But Signe had left the room, and gone to sit

with her little sister Elfva, who never left her couch. Lately, the doctor had given a little hope that perhaps after a time she would be able to move about; but that all depended upon her keeping very still now. So Signe rarely left her, but read to, or amused her most of the day. Fröken von Claaken found the tutor sitting on a garden seat, waiting for Gustaf, to start on one of their long expeditions. She sat down by his side, and when she had recovered her breath after walking so quickly, she began,

'Mr. Nordén ——'

'Well, madam!'

Now, Mr. Nordén had a very pleasant and polite way of saying this 'Well, madam,' which always disarmed the little lady's anger whenever she had tried to give him a little scolding. But to-day he said it with more than usual respectfulness and courtesy; besides, when a fine young man six feet high without counting his heels, stoops forward kindly and attentively to listen to what a little stout maiden lady no longer young has to say to him, it's a little difficult for the little lady to be very severe with the young fellow. Fröken von Claaken found herself in this difficulty now. All

her anger was fast evaporating, and she hardly knew how to begin what she had to say. She looked at Nordén's thick high boots, with his trousers tucked inside them, and saw that he was bent on what she called an absurd ramble. This gave her courage, and catching sight at the same moment of his bandit hat, she fixed her eyes on it and said, 'Excuse me, Mr. Nordén, is that your new hat?'

She had meant to begin by giving him some kind motherly advice, and she was quite shocked at herself for starting with her subject so abruptly.

'My new hat?' said Nordén, astonished at such an unexpected question. 'My new hat?' and he took it up in his hand and began to examine it slowly. 'Yes, certainly, it is my new hat,' and he looked at her questioningly.

'Well, really,' broke out the little lady, 'I call that too extravagant! The boys tell me you slit and tear as many hats as shoes here, and no wonder, when you go scampering and clambering over rocks and mountains and forests without any thought, dragging that boy with you, and not caring whether you have on old things or new. How can the boy learn to take care of his clothes when he sees such an example before him, and—

and—and—have you not an old hat? And why didn't you get it mended? You ought to have asked Anna to do it for you, you ought.' It would be difficult to describe how this was all said; one sentence followed the other without thought or order, and the little woman only stopped at last for want of breath.

Nordén felt a strong inclination to laugh aloud, but his sense of politeness restrained him, though it was some moments before he could answer, and even then he did not trust himself to look at Fröken, but kept his eyes on the hat which lay on his knee. 'I don't know; I don't think I have the old one.'

'Have you thrown it away, then?' asked Fröken von Claaken.

'No; but I told Jean that if he could do anything with the hat he might have it. It was really very torn,' added he, to pacify his angry little friend, but his mouth quivered with suppressed fun, and longing to laugh.

Fröken von Claaken felt she was victorious, and she was determined to make use of her victory.

'But you have another besides, have you not,' she said.

'Yes, I had; but that one I gave to the fisherman,' answered Nordén humbly.

Poor little woman! when she heard this she began to think that if Nordén went on destroying his hats at this rate soon the whole place would be wearing the same bandit headdress. However, it was impossible for her to be angry when the young fellow was so humble, and they finished their conversation by being better friends than they were before. Nordén promised to try and take better care of his clothes, and even to come to her, if in any case he needed her help.

'I must take your mother's place here, and look after you,' said the good-natured little woman; and Nordén thanked her warmly and heartily, and was very glad he had not given way to his inclination to laugh at her. And from that day forward every one noticed that Fröken von Claaken had taken Nordén under her care.

The forest rambles went on as usual. Henrik went with them as often as he could, and enjoyed seeing how strong and courageous Gustaf was growing, and what an interest he took in the natural history of the living things he saw on his road. Henrik described to those at home how

they scrambled over the rocks, and that when the way was difficult or too steep for Gustaf, Nordén always took him in his arms and carried him over, or else pushed him up first, and then scrambled after. He always had an eye on Gustaf's slightest movement when the road was in the least degree dangerous. Gustaf was learning in these excursions the appearance, name, and class of every flower in the neighbourhood, also the habits, eggs, and nests of the birds. If sometimes the boy forgot the marks on the eggs, or how the little ones looked, Nordén always sent him up the tree again to see, and in this way he taught the boy not only to notice what he saw but to remember it, a habit Nordén very much approved of.

As can be well understood, the boy was delighted with a tutor who was so good and kind to him; he grew fonder of him every day, and every evening he went up to his sister Elfva's room and told her all the adventures and exploits he and Nordén had had during the day. 'Carlos,' said Gustaf one day, 'I once promised to tell you how I liked the tutor you got for me. It was very nice to have a new saddle for Trot, but it's much nicer to have Mr. Nordén.

CHAPTER VI.

LORD MACAULAY ON THE JEWS.

ABOUT this time Nils Nordén wrote a letter to his mother, which we will take the liberty of reading.

'MOTHER MINE,—Since I last wrote I have begun to feel much more at home here in Hafnäs, and on a more friendly footing with the different members of the family, all except Fröken Beatrice. She hardly takes any notice of my presence, and passes me by as if I were some domestic animal she had no wish to meddle with. On Fröken von Claaken's kind heart I have made a great impression since that affair of the hat, for I asked her one day to recommend me a man about the village who could mend me a pair of boots that were too good to be given away. So the dear old woman is quite gratified at the result of her lecture. Fröken Signe has always been most kind and friendly to me, as I have always

told you, mamma mine. She is the most beautiful girl I ever saw—except Beatrice. The two sisters are a striking contrast to each other. Signe is fair as a summer day, and beaming with goodness and warmth; but Beatrice is like the winter night's queen, glorious and beautiful with all her stars around her. But, there, I am beginning again about her—forgive me, sweet mother. I will only tell you that once she noticed me, and looked at me earnestly, which was very unusual for her, and very flattering for me.

'The conversation had turned on the Jews. You know, darling mother, that is one of my pet hobbies. As usual, the Jews were being dreadfully abused, and, as I never can bear that, I gave them my opinion on the subject. As a rule, I rarely talk at dinner, especially as old Dr. Bogarius thinks Greek and Latin the best sauce for a good appetite; so they were all a little astonished when I spoke up in favour of the Jews. I told them it was not national weakness and inborn greediness of character which was the cause of their present moral humiliation, but the force of outward circumstances which had reduced

God's chosen people to the state in which they now unhappily are. And then I quoted Lord Macaulay's noble words, when speaking for the emancipation of the Jews in Parliament, where he said, "And if in the course of many hundred years these oppressed descendants of scholars and warriors have degenerated from their fathers' talent; if they, excluded from the protection of the laws and trodden down under slavery's yoke, have imbibed some of the vices which belong to criminals and slaves, can we well reproach them for that? Is it not rather a cause for shame and disgrace to us ourselves? Let us at once give them justice! Let us give them an entrance into Parliament! Let us open to them every path where power and strength are required! And, lastly, before we do this, let us not allow ourselves to say that Esaias' countrymen are without genius, or that Maccabeus' descendants are without courage." I quoted this from memory, and, as I did so, there was silence all round the table. I couldn't help noticing that, whilst I spoke, Fröken Beatrice's eyes were cast down, and when she now and then raised them up it was as if a gleam of light shot through the

room. Once when Henrik spoke to me I felt she was looking at me earnestly; but I daresay you will think me very childish when I tell you that, much as I longed to see the expression on her face at that moment, I did not dare look up and meet her gaze. In the evening of the same day, as I was sitting in the drawing-room, much to my astonishment, Beatrice came to me and began talking. She thanked me for my defence of the Jews, and as I did not know why she did so, I merely bowed my acknowledgments; when she added, "Carlos and I have a special reason for thanking you. I hardly know if the others are aware of the fact, or if Carlos remembers it himself, but our mother's mother was a Jewess. Will you kindly tell me the name of the book in which Lord Macaulay speaks so well of the Jews, as you told us at dinner, and I will send to town for it."

'I gave her the title of the book; she thanked me simply and kindly, and went back to her seat. You see, mamma dear, that all hope is not lost, and that we can be good friends in time. My letter is long, so long that even a mother like mine can be tired of it. A word about myself,

for which, I know, my sweet mother will look first. I am quite well. A selfish boy! but who made me so?

'Your own boy,

'NILS.'

CHAPTER VII.

A FIGHT WITH BROOM-STEALERS.

ONE morning, as Carlos came in and sat down to breakfast, he said, 'I have an expedition to propose, but unfortunately only for the gentlemen. It is to go either to Sjötorpe or as far as the forest grotto—the time, to-night at half-past twelve.'

Curiosity was depicted on every face round the table as they asked why and wherefore.

'Broom-stealers,' said he after he had let them guess a little. 'A lot of free people, who live on the other side of the forest, and gain their living partly by making brooms, for which they come on my lands and steal the sticks, cutting down the young tender trees, and doing much damage. The bailiff has long suspected this, but now he has found out for certain that to-night they intend cutting a whole cartload of sticks and whisks, and carrying them to the neighbouring town to sell in the market. So, as he is anxious to catch

them in the act, he means to make up a party for the expedition, and to let me join as an amateur. If Henrik and Mr. Nordén are inclined, and care to spend the night in catching broom-stealers, they can accompany us.'

Fröken von Claaken entreated Carlos not to do anything of the kind; neither to go himself nor persuade the others—for she could not imagine what they wanted in joining any such expedition.

'But it's a question of my own brooms, sweet aunt,' said Carlos laughingly; 'and I think no one has a better right than I to help to drive such thieves away. Don't you know, aunty dear, that they do an immense deal of harm to the forest, especially when they take the young and tender trees?'

'Do you know if they go armed?' asked Nordén.

'Prudent general!' answered Carlos. 'No; the bailiff is almost sure that they are never armed; besides, he says, they hardly ever make a stand, so there is not the least fear of danger.'

This last was said to reassure the ladies. But Fröken von Claaken would listen to nothing; and when she found everything she said had no effect

on the gentlemen, she turned to Beatrice and begged her to try and dissuade Carlos from such a 'mad scheme.' But Beatrice thought it quite natural they should like to be of the party, and added, 'If it was only allowable, I should enjoy going with them myself.' Fröken clasped her hands in despair, whereupon Carlos promised her an entire new set of house brooms if they were successful in catching the thieves.

'Do let me go with you,' begged little Gustaf.

'No, no, of course not,' answered Carlos. 'One can't go botanising men as one does flowers, and the birds will all be in their nests asleep; so you could not peep in and count their eggs.'

Towards midnight Nordén awoke out of his best sleep. He jumped up, looked out of the window to see what weather it was, dressed himself hastily, and then crept downstairs. Here he found Carlos.

'I am taking a pistol with me in case of need,' whispered Carlos to him; 'and I have put one in readiness for you, and one for Henrik;' and he handed Nordén a small revolver, who took it, examined it, and then put it in his pocket.

'The bailiff thought it would be safest,' added

Carlos as they were going out of the stables; 'but I have only loaded them with loose gunpowder and salt.

'With salt!'

'Yes; coarse salt, for that smarts confoundedly, and terrifies them as much, without doing any dangerous harm. Here comes Henrik.'

At the stable door a little carriage was waiting for them. The three gentlemen and the bailiff jumped in and drove about half an hour's distance. Then they alighted, and walked through the forest till they came to a little road which led down to the other side of the forest, and through which the broom-makers would have to go to get that way to the town.

The moon shone forth from behind a cloud just as they came to a little open space in the forest, and was bright and beautiful on the tops of the pines, whilst at their feet lay long shadows of black darkness.

'Here we were to meet our own men,' said the bailiff; and as he spoke some dark figures came forward and stood before them. They were eight strong fellows, who had been sent forward by the bailiff to keep watch. The bailiff went over and

spoke a word to them, and then they quietly crept away.

'I have sent them a little farther down behind the hill,' he answered, when Carlos inquired where they were going. 'It's just possible the rascals may choose the other way, so I thought it safest to post our men where the road joins this one. If they hear the least noise on this side they are to rush up to us as fast as possible.'

'Let me see,' said Carlos, 'it's now just half-past two; you don't think they may have already passed?'

'Oh, no, Sir Count; it's much more likely we shall have to wait a little,' answered the bailiff; 'for if I have reckoned rightly they will pass here about three, perhaps even later.'

Some time passed by. Henrik sat on an old stump of a tree, and Nordén laid himself flat down on the ground, with his face turned up to the moon, which was sailing along behind one beautiful cloud after the other. Now and then his eyes closed with a feeling of great enjoyment. Carlos stood under the shadow of a tree, speaking in a low voice to the bailiff.

'Don't sleep, Mr. Nordén,' said the bailiff,

whenever he thought the tutor's eyes had been long closed. 'We may have our friends here at any moment,' added he, as he looked at his watch.

'Nay, I am not sleeping,' answered Nordén, and as he spoke they heard a step and the noise of wheels. The noise grew nearer and nearer, and at last they saw figures. First came a cart, drawn by a peasant's horse, and driven by one man. Two other carts were fastened to the first, so that the same horse drew all three. Then came a handcart, with one man in front, and another pushing behind. At last came three other men, who followed as a kind of escort.

'Are you sure it is they?' whispered Carlos.

'Yes,' answered the bailiff; 'it's best to let them pass, and then they will meet our own men down there, and we will follow, and take them from behind.'

'No,' answered Carlos, who seemed to have forgotten that he had only joined as an amateur; and he stepped forward out of the shadows, jumped over the ditch, and stood in the full moonshine in the middle of the road before the broom-stealers. The others followed him.

'Imprudent! we are four against six,' muttered the bailiff; but he saw his young master had taken the command on himself, so he submitted.

In the meantime the cavalcade stood still, and gathered in a group to discuss what they should do. They evidently decided to break through, and as they were six to four it looked likely they would succeed. They came nearer, and one called out in an angry voice,

'What do you want with the horse? Can't we go along the road in peace?'

'Answer me first,' said Carlos. 'Who has given you leave to cut down twigs from Hafnäs forest? The whole of the forest from where you come down to the sea belongs to the Count of Hafnäs. Has he given you leave to cut down branches for brooms?'

'That's him, himself; let's at him,' said the man who had already spoken; and, setting the example, he rushed forward at Carlos, who, till now, had stood still in the road with his hands in his pockets.

At the moment of this onset, Carlos bent back his body, and in an instant brought his clenched hand with such force between the eyes of his

antagonist that the fellow staggered back into the arms of his comrade, who had also sprung forward to attack the Count. The strife now began on all sides. The bailiff and Henrik had each an opponent. Nordén seized the first who came near him, took hold of his coat collar with both hands, and, lifting him up in the air, threw him down on the ground with such force that he broke his ribs, and was obliged to remain prostrate. He then turned on a gigantic man, in disguise, who was just going to seize Carlos from behind. Nordén aimed a blow at his face, but it missed, and he in his turn was grasped round the body, and a violent struggle ensued, which the others were too busy with their own affairs to take any notice of. Carlos stood with his back against a tree, a precaution he took when he saw the danger he had escaped so narrowly of being seized from behind, and by great coolness and well-directed blows succeeded in keeping two of his enemies at bay. Henrik and the bailiff came to his assistance at last, as their opponents had taken to their heels, and the three together easily overpowered these two, and then they had time to think about Nordén, who was nowhere to be seen.

'Where can Nordén be?' said Henrik, uneasy about him. 'I do hope nothing has happened to him.'

'Here am I,' was heard in answer to their call, from the ditch which ran along the path.

They found the tutor, without his hat, sitting calmly on his disguised adversary, whom he held down on his back, and with one hand on his throat.

'If some one will give me a bit of rope I will soon secure this thankless fellow,' said Nordén; 'for if he gets up he will not be easy to get down again, and at present he is a little queer in his head! My poor hat! do look at it,' he added, as with his other hand he picked up his 'bandit headdress' which had fallen off and been torn in the late struggle. 'Fröken von Claaken will be sure to be angry with me again, for I can't possibly wear it any more!'

Carlos let off a shot, which soon brought up his servants, bringing with them the two men who, in running away, had passed the spot where they stood, so had been easily captured. The fight had been so short that had the servants heard and known what was going on, and hastened to

the rescue, they could not have been up in time to be of any use; as it was, they had done the best service they could by securing the two who had tried to escape.

The prisoners were bound, and the bailiff was told to keep them in custody till the bailiffs of the province could send after them. The big fellow in disguise was found to be a smith, called Birgir, who had long been suspected of having joined these marauders.

'He is the biggest fellow in the whole district,' said the bailiff aside to Henrik, 'but any one can see that Mr. Nordén is as strong as a bear. Well! it did astonish me to see how the Count defended himself. Those small white lady's hands of his struck out as if they were made of iron!'

When Carlos thanked Nordén for having saved him from the smith Birgir's attack, the tutor answered ingenuously,

'As to that, I think it would have been better if I had left him to you, and taken one of the others instead. I was so awkward with him that it was more good luck than skill which enabled me to succeed in overpowering him.'

'But how came you both in the ditch?'

'Well, I must confess that I did not fight very fairly with my friend Birgir. He seized me round the body, so that I thought he was going to break me in two by my middle; so I gave him the benefit of a trick I had learnt at school, and then we rolled over one another down in the ditch, but I fell uppermost, and Birgir got a knock on the head, which made it easy for me to hold him down.'

'Ah, yes, Mr. Nordén,' said Carlos; 'you are too modest to tell me much about the affair; but, take care, I shall ask Birgir himself about it to-morrow, or rather I should say to-day, for it is already half-past five in the morning.'

This conversation was held during the drive home, where they very soon after arrived.

A few hours later on in the morning, the men were brought into the courtyard. The Crown bailiffs had arrived, and were only awaiting the orders of the Count to conduct them away to prison. Carlos went down and spoke to them.

'You are living the life of vagabonds and wood-stealers,' said he, 'and we have caught you in the act; so that it is quite in my power to have you severely punished. You say that it was impossible

to get work, and *that* is why you are driven to do as you have done. Very well. I invite you now to choose between two things: you shall have work at once here, and continue to have it as long as you do it properly and well; or I will send you to prison and accuse you of wood-stealing. Which will you have?'

One or two accepted at once the work; but, strange as it may seem, it was only after some moments' hesitation that the two worst agreed to accept the Count's offer of work. To an inveterate vagabond or beggar there is nothing so odious as constant daily employment. At last, they all six had decided.

'Very well,' said Carlos. 'I shall only say one word more, and that will be the last, on broom-stealing. So long as you all work like honest fellows, I shall treat you as such, and let all that has happened be forgotten. But if one of you returns to his old bad habits I will have him taken up, as sure as I stand here; for forest depredation I am determined to put an end to, cost what it will. And now that is my last word. You are all free again.'

The delinquents had all stood with their eyes

fastened on Carlos' face whilst he was talking to them, and they saw that the Count was a man to keep his word, as they had felt the night before he had been able to defend himself, small and delicate as he looked.

The big smith Birgir was the only one who spoke. 'Sir Count,' said he, 'nothing has gone well with me till to-day, and I won't try to exculpate myself; but I know that if any one had spoken to me before as you have to-day, I think I should have been a better man.' And he passed his big rough hand over his eyes.

Carlos turned round to Signe, who stood by, and said softly, 'Who do you think will rejoice over those tears?'

'The angels in heaven,' answered she, in the same tone.

'Yes, but an angel on earth also,' answered he. 'Have you not guessed that it was Elfva who asked me to forgive them?'

CHAPTER VIII.

STORIES FROM CHILDHOOD.

A FEW days after, Nils Nordén wrote again to his mother :—

'DEAR MOTHER,—All is well here. I have written so much about each member of the family that I think you must know them all. But there is still one I myself have only learnt to know lately. This is little Elfva Lilienrooth, who, as I told you long ago, is always ill and confined to her room. I have heard that it was her step-father, Count Falkenheim, who by accident hurt her back; but how it happened I don't know, for they naturally speak very unwillingly about it here; but it appears he never after had a happy hour, and that he grieved very much over it, even on his deathbed. I have seen her now and then, or rather caught a glimpse of her, for I have never spoken to her. I often hear the others speak of her, and I have many times wondered at the wonderful

influence she has over the others, although she is always lying on her bed. Yesterday, Gustaf came to me and said that his sister Elfva had asked him if I would mind going up to see her. Of course I went immediately. She was in her own room, lying on a kind of invalid-chair. She is like Signe in face, and looks about twelve, though Gustaf says she is fifteen; but her face is so childlike and angelic that one can hardly fancy her so old.

'"Good morning, Mr. Nils," said she, as I went in. (All the others call me Mr. Nordén.) "It is very kind of you to come up. I have so long wanted to make your acquaintance, for it seems so strange that I should never have spoken to one who is so good to Gustaf." I hardly answered anything, but sat enjoying the sound of her voice. I have never before heard such a sweet tone. "You have been so kind to Gustaf," she continued. "He tells me everything you do—how you teach him to swim and to row, and that you are never cross with him, as the old Doctor often is."

'I answered that it was impossible to be cross with such a good little boy as Gustaf, &c.

"'Will you promise not to think me very childish?"—and she looked up in my face with a hesitating smile—"if I ask you something I very much want to know? Gustaf tells me that you never allow him to take the eggs away from the birds. Do you do that from yourself, Mr. Nils, or has some one begged you not to do it?" "It was some one who asked me not," I said. She looked down; but I heard a soft voice say, "Who?" "My mother," I answered.

'She was silent. I saw that she wanted to hear more, but that she did not like to ask me. "It's a simple little story," I said. "When I was a very little boy I had found a nest full of eggs. As I took it away the hen-bird almost flew at me; but I carried it home to show mamma, who I thought would be as pleased as I was with it. Instead of which she asked me if I had begged leave of the mother bird to take her nest away. 'Begged leave?' I exclaimed, astonished. She sat me on her knee, and told me that she also had a little nest with one young one in it, and asked me what she should do if some one came and took it from her."

'"But what about the bird's nest?" asked Elfva, who would hear the end of the story.

'"She told me to take it back again, and I did so. But now I have told you a simple little story of my childhood," I said, as I finished; and I am ashamed to add, dear mamma, that I could not help wondering to myself what Beatrice would have said had she heard me repeating to Elfva such absurd reminiscences of my boyhood. A few moments after Elfva said,

'"But, now the young one has flown away from the nest, is not the mother very sad?"

'"The young one had become too passionate and arrogant to remain in the nest. He wished to try the strength of his wings by himself," I answered.

'She made me no reply. I looked at her, and thought I noticed her getting very pale. "Shall I ring for some one?" I asked, a little uneasy.

'"No, thank you; there is always somebody in the inner room." I rose up and said good-bye to her, and I was just opening the door, when who should I see advance from the inner apartment but Beatrice! You may think me very silly,

mother, but, had I known that *she* could hear my conversation with little Elfva, I should not have talked about such silly things as robbing birds' nests. But Elfva has a pretty way with her which obliges one to chat with her as she likes best, and she makes one feel at home with her at once. Every one goes to her with his or her secrets, and she sympathises with and helps them all in every trouble and difficulty, from Carlos to Gustaf. I might naturally have supposed some person was in the inner room, but I didn't think about it.

'Beatrice had evidently been with Elfva before I went up, and, as she seems not to care for my company, she preferred retiring out of the way before I arrived. And I can fancy her sitting in there, listening to my bird-story with that provoking sarcastic expression round her mouth I know so well. It's very stupid of me to be so sensitive about being laughed at, but that is one of my great weaknesses. However, I didn't say anything so *very* dreadful to be laughed at. But enough. It's impossible to say why I could not talk to Beatrice as I can to Elfva, but it's quite certain that—it is so—so there, now! As I have succeeded

in bringing out my meaning so clearly, I will leave it to your dear motherly instinct to understand my confusion—which, however, is all gone now. For the rest we sail, row, bathe, fish, and amuse ourselves till it seems sometimes to me as if Gustaf and I do the lessons only when we have time for them.

'A few days ago I joined the others upon an expedition to catch some broomstick stealers, who here, as in our home, are difficult to exterminate. We captured a whole lot of carts full of broomsticks. The fellows fought us—which had one advantage in it, for it showed me what sort of stuff Carlos is made of. He fought for his broomsticks as he would have for the kingdom. The proud Cid himself, whose blood most likely flows in his veins—for his mother was Spanish—could not have done it better. Both he and Henrik had bruises and scratches. I, for my part, had a vigorous embrace which you would not have liked had you seen it. I escaped unhurt; but if any one wants to know how a boa-constrictor crushes his victim, I can describe it. But, sweet mamma, don't be uneasy; I am all right. I should not have men-

tioned it, only I promised to tell you of everything that happened to me.

'I am getting much more intimate with Henrik, who is dreamy and imaginative in his way and does not talk much; but he has much in him, and is a very nice fellow.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE PUTTING IN ORDER OF DR. BOGARIUS'S ROOM.

FRÖKEN VON CLAAKEN attended to her housewifely duties with strength, kindness, and punctuality. She belonged to the good old time when people did well whatever was their duty. She was very severe on every subject connected with order and cleanliness. She had many strong points in her character, but this was the strongest. When the appointed days for cleaning came round, all who could kept out of her way, and left the rooms free for her to do as she liked with them. When one saw the little lady, surrounded by her maidens armed with brooms, dusters, and such-like instruments of work, superintending the cleaning of a room or one of the long corridors, one involuntarily likened her to a little tug-boat towing in some large sailing vessel with high masts. Had she done as she ought, she would have taken Beatrice's advice, and allowed herself to be photographed

on such an occasion; but she thought Beatrice was laughing at her, so would not do it; and she did not think that one day, when she went up to the next world, it would be pleasant for those left behind to have a remembrance of her in her brightest mood. On these days she was always very happy; a clean, well-arranged room was a paradise to her, and it always was an intense pleasure to her to remain master of the field, and have driven away her enemies, dust and disorder, from out of her sight. In the evening of such a day, when she came to look back upon her work, there was always one dark spot in the otherwise bright picture. Dr. Bogarius's territory defied her power; there she never dared enter. It would be difficult to describe how very much this worried the poor little Fröken. It was her thorn in the flesh. That the doctor, in a house in which she was mistress, should persist in living in a room where brushes and brooms never entered, and where the moths danced a jubilee on the very chair on which he sat, was to her most irritating. She groaned over such a state of things. 'But, poor man! he knows no better,' she said, and then wondered at her own patience in submitting to it.

Submitting to it! why she had done everything she could to get her own way. She had appealed to the doctor himself, but he would not listen. She had spoken gently, but it was of no use. She had spoken angrily, but he remembered Socrates' method of treating an angry woman, so that was of no use. She then altered her tone, and begged to be allowed to take the furniture only out into the landing, and have it dusted there. For a moment the doctor hesitated; but then came the thought of his beloved papers and open folios, and he was more determined than ever. She asked Carlos to help her, but he laughingly refused to meddle in the affair.

'What could the poor old fellow do away from his books?' asked he. 'I can go out shooting; but he?—shall we send him out to take a row on the lake?'

She then in her distress turned to Beatrice. The two women often had a spar together; but, for all that, they were very good friends.

'Dear Beatrice,' said the troubled lady, 'won't you help me?'

'I can; but I don't know that I will,' answered Beatrice.

'Don't know that you *will!*' uttered Fröken, at her wits' end.

'Yes; I am not quite sure that I will take your part against the dear old man.'

'But do you think it right for him to live as he does—never have his windows open, summer or winter? His bedroom we can do, but not his study.'

At last it was arranged between them that Beatrice would engage to occupy the doctor for a few hours next cleaning day, and get him away from his room, on condition that everything was put back in order as it was left, and the work done in the time specified. 'He will never remark its being clean, any more than he does its being so dusty,' remarked Beatrice.

The cleaning day arrived. Fröken told Beatrice all was in readiness to begin. Beatrice sent Annette, her maid, down to ask the doctor to come up to her, as she had to talk to him on an important subject. Annette went down and knocked; no answer. She knocked again; and, still getting no answer, she ventured to open the door and look in. There sat the doctor in one of his reveries. The table, chairs, floor, all were

covered with books and papers, and at the table sat the doctor with an open book before him. Annette went up to him, and, touching him to get his attention, she gave her mistress's message.

'What's the matter? oh, yes! certainly, certainly;' and the doctor rose from his chair in a great hurry. 'Tell your mistress I will at once have the honour of making my bow to her.'

Annette left the room and waited at the end of the corridor to conduct the doctor to her mistress's room. In a few moments he came, and she ushered him into the presence of her young lady, and then flew off to tell Fröken von Claaken that the coast was clear.

'Good morning, dear doctor,' said Beatrice. 'I want to ask you to do a little kindness for me.'

Bogarius said, in his usual way, 'Certainly, certainly.'

'I wonder if you will be so good, then, as to make out this pedigree for me. I know that you are quite at home in such matters.'

'Certainly, certainly; why not?' answered he. 'I have often spent hours over genealogical researches, and I think I know the origin.'

'You said one day, dear doctor,' interrupted

Beatrice, 'that Göran Classon's descendants took the name of Falkenheim, and it's through him we have relationship with Carl Knatsen. Is it so?'

'Certainly, certainly; but through the female line—Carl VIII. Knatsen's daughter, namely ——'

'Thank you, it's just *that* that I want you to write down for me. You have the books?'

'Certainly; they are in the library. I will go there now, and do it for you,' said Dr. Bogarius; and he was so delighted with the subject that he was soon at full work in the library, hauling over old books, and with no thought of anything else for hours to come.

In the meantime Fröken von Claaken had hurried into his room, with all her maidens at her side, to commence operations there. She knew her time was short, and urged on the maids to their greatest speed. Brooms and brushes went to work. Cobwebs were swept away in hundreds; whole families of spiders turned out—dust, smoke, all vanished under her commands. Fröken von Claaken stood by the window, putting in order the pipe and tobacco-stand. She was just finishing it herself, as she imagined no servant could arrange it in the same order as she

found it, when one of the girls nearest the door exclaimed, 'The doctor is coming!' Flight was impossible, and in the next moment he stood in the doorway, looking through the dust into the room. The old lady's heart beat quickly. It was a terrible moment—the moment before the storm. There stood the doctor, big and tall as he was, with his cap on his head and his pipe in his hand. He took a step into the room. Fröken von Claaken prepared herself for the coming battle like a prudent little general. Her maids stood still, hardly daring to breathe. But the doctor was thinking of other things. He went straight to his pipe-stand, filled his pipe with tobacco, and then quietly lit it, turned round, and vanished as he had come.

As soon as the noise of his steps had died away, Fröken von Claaken drew a deep breath.

'Thank God!' she said, in a tone of extreme relief. 'He noticed nothing! Now hasten, all of you, for as soon as that pipe is finished he will be back again.'

'No, no; there is no fear of that, respected madam,' said one of the girls; 'he took the tobacco-pouch with him!'

CHAPTER X.

THE TUTOR ON HORSEBACK.

NORDÉN'S hope that he and Beatrice might in time become good friends seemed destined to disappointment. For a while she was kind and amiable, and treated him, as her brothers and Signe did, as if he were a friend of the family; and after the conversation about the Jews, she behaved to him with marked distinction, and entered into conversation with him as often as opportunity arose. But lately there was an apparent change. She had returned to her old habit of indifference, and rarely joined in any conversation in which he took part; or, if she did, she employed towards him her usual refined and delicate irony, which generally had the effect of reducing him to silence, or compelling him to retort and defend himself with the same weapon. The consequence was, Nordén's manner became constrained and nervous in her presence, and his

usual bright merriment deserted him whenever she entered the room. The others noticed this change, and wondered what had caused it. Carlos plainly asked Beatrice what Nordén had done to give her offence, and make her manner towards him so scornful and cold. Much to Carlos's surprise, Beatrice answered him in an unusally cross tone:

'You are all so delighted with him, it does not matter what I think. You all think him perfect.'

Her brother looked at her inquiringly, and then said,

'Has he by chance tried to show his equality with my haughty little sister? Has he been giving you a lesson on the elegant saying, that we are all equal before God? I'll bet anything he has. Is it not so? Or are you angry with him because the portrait you drew of him was not good? Lank, fair hair! What else? Coat that reached above the collar! Ha, ha! Is it so, my sweet sister?'

But Beatrice seemed not in a humour to be teased. She looked so angry and threatening that Carlos told her that he should seek a sunnier climate. As he was going, she suddenly said,

'Carlos, what have you done with that caricature? Have you it still?'

'That one? Oh, no! I took it directly Nordén arrived, and compared it with the original. Since then he has kept it. He thought the drawing was very good.'

Beatrice's face flushed scarlet. Then she turned pale as ashes; but her eyes flashed, as she said,

'Is that true, Carlos?'

Carlos felt sorry for teasing her, and told her that the drawing was on her table when he last saw it; but that most likely it had been since thrown away, as she did not seem to have it herself. And Beatrice also thought this was very likely.

She little knew how well Nils Nordén kept that portrait, and how he sometimes took it out and looked at it when he felt the dark eyes had been reading him too closely. He kept it as a balm to heal such sorrows.

One day the horses stood saddled and waiting in the courtyard. Beatrice and Signe were going to ride with Carlos. They came to the steps, and Carlos helped Signe to mount; and then he found something was wrong with the stirrup, which took

him some little time to arrange. Beatrice grew impatient at waiting, and began to gently stamp her foot—a habit she had when slightly vexed. Nordén, who was standing by watching her, seeing this, came forward, and offered to assist her to mount. Beatrice looked at him, as if she hardly understood what he meant. He quietly repeated,

'Shall I help Fröken Beatrice to mount?'

'Have you ever helped a lady to mount before?' she asked, in a cold tone.

He reddened, and hesitated a moment before answering.

'Yes, I have. Will you allow me?' And he held his hand for her foot.

She put her foot on it, and sprang at the same instant into the saddle. It almost seemed as if she thus hastened for fear he would commit some awkwardness. But, whether it was her own lightness or his adroitness which did it, in either case she was very skilfully placed in her seat.

Without waiting for him to arrange her stirrup, she thanked him with a slight inclination of her head, gave her horse a cut with the whip, and started forward to join the others, who were already moving on. They rode down the long

avenue in silence. When they reached the end, Carlos said,

'Well! how did he comport himself? Did he do the right thing? You put him through a cruel ordeal.'

He expected some disparaging reply from Beatrice, and was therefore much surprised when she briefly answered,

'He helped me remarkably well.'

'What! really? It seems to me he can do well whatever he undertakes. *I* should not be surprised if he can also ride well, although he always declines to join us whenever I invite him. We must try to get him on horseback, and see how he manages.'

'It would be a great pity, though, if he got hurt,' said Signe. The subject did not seem to interest Beatrice; for she put an end to it by suddenly striking her horse and breaking into a gallop.

A short time after this an opportunity occurred for Carlos to carry out his wish of persuading Nordén to mount a horse.

Carlos had lately bought a new horse. The

first time he rode him he went very well; but the next day the animal, called Prospero, was in a bad humour and very troublesome to manage; and, when Carlos returned from his ride, it might be easily seen, from both horse and rider, that there had been a strong contest.

The next time Carlos was to ride Prospero, the whole family went down to watch him mount and ride away. At the door they met Gustaf and his tutor just going out on a botanising excursion.

'Stop a moment, Mr. Nordén,' said Carlos, who could not resist the temptation of finding out if Nordén could ride. 'My new horse will be here directly. Will you try him? He will suit you admirably, but I fear I am rather too small for him.'

'So you wish to see me lying on the grass, do you, Count?' answered Nordén, cheerfully. 'I am, as you once said, a "prudent general," and I intend keeping your good opinion.'

As he said this, he caught the expression of Beatrice's face. He thought he saw she had put another meaning on the word '*prudent.*' Her sarcastic mouth always made Nordén's blood boil;

therefore, he hastily altered his mind, and added to Carlos,

'But, if you wish it, and it will give the ladies pleasure, I will sacrifice myself.'

Prospero was now led up, saddled and bridled. The beautiful dark-brown creature stood perfectly still, whilst they all looked at and admired him. The movement of the small, short ears, and the restless eyes, were the only warning that it was not a quiet lamb that stood there.

At last Carlos turned to Nordén.

'Are you ready?' said he; for he half expected the tutor would draw back at the last moment.

'Yes,' said Nordén, as he went towards the horse.

He took the reins cautiously; as he put his foot in the stirrup, Prospero, who had hitherto stood quite still, suddenly reared on his hind legs. The groom did all he could to hold him down, but his efforts were useless.

'Let go the reins!' thundered Nordén, as he sprang into the saddle.

Carlos became somewhat anxious, specially when he perceived that the stirrups, which were sufficiently long for him, were much too short for

Nordén, who would either have to do without them, or have his long legs too much doubled up. He preferred not to use them; therefore he got no aid from the stirrups in managing the angry creature. As soon as Prospero felt himself free from the groom's hand, he gave a tremendous plunge, and the next moment sprang high in the air, kicking violently. He reared on his hind legs, kicked, plunged, and did everything he could to throw his rider.

At first Carlos could not avoid calling out a word of advice; but he soon was silent, observing with intense pleasure the splendid manner Nordén sat his horse. His anxiety all vanished as he saw him coolly and quietly calming the plunging animal, by degrees curbing him in till the creature left off kicking, and then trotting him round the courtyard, and finally bringing him back to the place where the strife began—subdued, submissive, and quite calm and manageable.

'Listen to me, Mr. Nordén,' said Carlos, as the tutor dismounted; 'one does not learn to ride like *that* at a riding-school. Confess the truth.'

'I have nothing to confess,' answered Nordén, smiling. 'I was, as you know, brought up in the

country, and there one learns to ride without exactly knowing how.'

'But why will you never join us when we ride?'

'Because riding is a pleasure I must wean myself from as a tutor; otherwise I should miss it too much if I had a situation where I could not have it. That is really the whole reason,' added he, as he saw the Count watching him with an inquiring expression.

And he went off with Gustaf on their excursion.

CHAPTER XI.

DR. BOGARIUS'S COMMENTARY IS IN DANGER.

'Good morning, doctor,' said Beatrice, one fine, warm morning, as she met the learned old man in the garden near the house. 'It's really delightful to know that you can't resist this lovely weather, and have come out to enjoy the soft air and sunshine.'

'I must confess,' answered he, 'that it's not so much the beautiful weather that has driven me out as the intense heat in my room.'

'Well, then, I will find you a nice place to sit and read in,' exclaimed Beatrice. 'The little meadow behind the garden has lately been mown, and to-day they have put the hay together in heaps. Come with me; I will choose you a haycock where you shall be seated most comfortably. I was going that way myself.'

A haycock! That was not just the sort of place the doctor himself would have chosen; but he had always been accustomed to obey Beatrice

ever since she was a little child, and he did not oppose her now. He took up his big folio, and followed her.

On the other side of the garden lay a meadow sloping down to the sea. It was not very big, but famous for its rich grass and beautiful field flowers, which now lay among the sweet-smelling haycocks drying in the summer sun.

Beatrice looked round, and chose a little haycock which lay near a wide-spreading tree. Here she led the doctor.

'See here,' she said, 'what a beautiful place I have found for you. Sit down on this side, and you will be in the shade of both hay and tree. Lean your back against the hay. That's right. Now I am sure you are comfortable. But don't forget, if you stay long, to move out of the sun when it comes round here. Will you promise not to forget this?'

Bogarius promised; and Beatrice left him with a friendly nod of her head. There sat the doctor with both long legs stretched out on the ground, and his two hands holding the folio. For a while he sat as Beatrice had told him, with his back leaning against the hay; but presently he slipped

down away from the haycock, and was so lost in his book and thoughts that he did not seem to know how uncomfortable was his position.

In the meantime, Beatrice had gone across the meadow, over a stile, and, continuing the footpath on the other side, soon arrived at her destination. This was a point stretching out into the sea, higher than the surrounding rocks on three sides, and behind the forest and mountain. There she could see over the Baltic to some of its numerous distant shores. A natural grotto in the mountain at her back offered a delicious coolness and shade from the burning mid-day sun. This grotto had two openings—one small and narrow, which led back to Hafnäs; the other, wide and large, leading out on to a flat cliff which formed the summit of the point, the sides of which sloped far down into the sea. This was Beatrice's favourite spot. She loved being alone; and above all things she loved being here on this wild spot alone with her own thoughts, having the beautiful view before her, and the calm stillness around her.

Here she sat down and looked out on the glorious scene. An open book lay on her lap, but she was not reading. A dreamy expression was in

her eyes, which showed that her thoughts were not occupied with the view, but far, far away. After sitting here about an hour she was roused by a loud shout coming from the side where she had left the doctor. She started up, and, with one glance from the side of the grotto which commanded a view of Hafnäs fields, she hastily sprang down by the way she came.

Amongst the favourite animals at Hafnäs was a young bull of pure Durham breed, of which Carlos was very proud. He often took his friends to see this animal, and delighted in showing them how good and obedient it was; but lately the creature had grown very savage. Carlos, however, persisted in saying that it was only playfulness, till Mr. Shorthorn—that was his name—had tossed one boy, and torn the skirts of one of the dairymaids, and then he was obliged to allow that such playfulness was dangerous. So Shorthorn was turned out into a meadow by himself, which ran along side by side with the one in which Dr. Bogarius had been placed by Beatrice.

Now, this morning, Shorthorn evidently thought that, if he could, he would get into the little meadow where the haycocks were piled with

such tempting looks. He butted against the fence which divided the two meadows, till at last he succeeded in pushing himself through. Proud as a conqueror, Shorthorn walked amongst the haycocks, and at last chose the most tempting-looking one, which happened to be where the doctor was sitting.

How long Bogarius and Shorthorn were on opposite sides of the haycock—the one lost in his book, hearing and seeing nothing, the other eating—it is impossible to say, but neither was aware of the other's presence. The noise Shorthorn made in munching the hay did not disturb the doctor; but, presently, a loud breathing did disturb him.

'It's the oxen with a haycart,' thought he, without looking up; and then he added aloud, 'Please leave the haycock I am sitting by to the last. By that time I shall have finished my chapter.'

He naturally got no answer to this request, but that he did not notice. After a little he began to feel that the hay behind him was moving; and no wonder, for the bull had playfully begun to toss it about with his horns. It was very tire-

some; it must be the haymakers who had come, and were casting his haycock up on their cart. Now the doctor thought that, if he gave them a sign of his presence, these haymakers would understand, and leave him in peace; and, taking out his big red handkerchief and holding it up high above his head, he began waving it about to show that he, Dr. Bogarius, was sitting on the other side.

Shorthorn stopped suddenly in his play at the sight of this big red thing moving about a yard from his nose. He became angry, as was to be supposed, and put his head down to the earth, and gave a low, threatening bellow.

Dr. Bogarius looked up, and, much to his astonishment, seeing neither oxen nor haymakers, he began to feel a little uneasy. He slowly peeped round the corner of the haycock, and then he had an idea of his danger. He rose up hastily, at the same time calling out with his loudest and strongest shouts.

This was the shout Beatrice had heard which made her spring down from the cliff so quickly. What she intended doing she did not know; but, light as a fawn, she rushed down, determined,

cost what it might, to help the doctor from the danger that single glance from the grotto had shown her he was in.

The doctor retreated behind the haycock, and got over a great part of the meadow towards the gate by hiding behind each haycock, the enraged animal following as well as he was able. The doctor would very likely have reached the gate in safety had he not turned his head to look at his enemy, and at the same moment his foot struck against a stone, and he fell. The situation was dangerous. The bull was just behind him, and the old man would have soon been done for had not Shorthorn's attention been attracted in another direction. Beatrice had just rushed forward and thrown her light summer shawl over the animal's head.

'Run!' she exclaimed, as Bogarius rose to his feet, and, seeing the young lady so unexpectedly there, stood still without moving. 'Run!' she repeated, stamping her foot with impatience as her eyes flashed; 'I can help myself.'

The doctor did not think of disobeying, and, as quickly as he could, he ran to the gate. Here

he stood, and held the gate half open for Beatrice, calling with all his might for help.

The shawl over his head bewildered Shorthorn for a moment or two, and then made his anger increase tenfold. He bellowed frightfully, swung his tail in the air, and, as soon as he could get rid of his blindfolding, rushed after his new enemy. But Beatrice had dashed behind a haycock. For a moment the animal stood singularly startled at her sudden disappearance. By hastily springing from one haycock to another, and taking care always to choose those nearest to the gate, she succeeded in keeping a short distance between herself and the bull. But to reach the gate she must pass over a bit of ground devoid of any haycocks. Trusting to her fleetness, she left her last sheltering place, and fled. Never did a pair of small feet fly so quickly; but in vain. Before she reached the gate the enraged animal was not twenty feet behind her, and dearly would the brave girl have had to pay for her courage had not help been at hand to rescue her.

Dr. Bogarius had till now stood behind the gate in safety; but, old and stiff as he was, he could not stand still and see the young girl die at his feet.

So, like a knightly old man as he was, he rushed forward, and, taking the great folio he had still under his arm in both hands, he threw it with all his strength right in the eyes of Shorthorn. The book opened its leaves in its flight, and the bull, astonished at receiving such a check in his career, turned suddenly round out of its way, and before he could recover himself both Beatrice and the doctor were beyond his reach.

A few moments after her fright was over, Beatrice recovered her usual sprightly cheerfulness.

'Well, doctor, you and I could appear with much success in Spain! You seem to have quite a talent for a *torreador!* But shall we not go home?' she added, as the doctor seemed inclined to linger.

He was looking back over the meadow with a longing expression. 'My poor commentary!' muttered he, sadly.

Just at this instant up came Nordén. He had heard some one calling; and, although he arrived too late to be of use, he had hastened to the spot from whence came the call.

Beatrice told him of all that had happened, and then added, 'Unfortunately, Mr. Shorthorn

reserves the doctor's book as a trophy. Look, there it lies.'

It was thoughtlessly said, and had she known Nordén better she would not have said it, but she did not for an instant imagine that he would try to restore the book to its owner. He went towards the meadow. Too late she repented her thoughtless words, and in her anxiety she sprang forward, and taking hold of his arm, she said, 'No, no! What are you thinking of doing? How can you imagine I meant any such thing?'

He stood still while she held his arm; then quietly answered, 'But the book is not the only trophy Shorthorn has won.' And, before Beatrice could hinder him, he had lightly sprung over the fence, gone past the place where the book lay, and picked up Beatrice's shawl which lay not far off. The bull made no opposition; he only bellowed softly, as he evidently thought he had had sufficient for one day. Nordén picked up the book, arranged the leaves which were crumpled in its fall, and then, walking back through the gate, he gave the shawl to Beatrice and the book to the doctor.

Beatrice uttered not one word. Speechlessly

she returned Nordén's bow, and walked away, quietly and silent, with the old doctor towards home.

Nordén stood still, leaning against the gate, until Beatrice and the doctor were out of sight; then he looked down with a soft, tender expression in his eyes on his arm—the arm Beatrice had held with her hand—and, gently raising it up, he put it to his lips, and kissed it.

CHAPTER XII.

IS IT QUITE TRUE?

ONE evening Beatrice sat in her own room, resting after a row with the others on the lake. The young lady's thoughts were not satisfactory. Before her lay a letter which the post had just brought, and which was the cause of the impatient and angry expression visible on her face. In this letter her Aunt Adelaide had taken the liberty of warning Beatrice against falling in love with the tutor. She had observed, she wrote, that Beatrice's thoughts often wandered around this point, and she believed that Beatrice only thought ill of him out of opposition; but when a young girl allows herself to think ill of a young man she will also allow herself to think well of him—the best is, not to think of him at all.

It is undeniable that Aunt Adelaide, in this respect, was right. The danger often showed itself in this way. But it is not to be wondered at that

Beatrice, who did not know her danger, should be displeased and annoyed at such well-meant advice.

Could Aunt Adelaide have seen the expression around Beatrice's mouth as she read the first few lines on this subject, most likely she would have laid down her pen and left Beatrice to take care of herself. 'How foolish,' said Beatrice, to herself, 'that people always fancy one is beginning to care for a man just because one talks or writes a little about him. How can Aunt Adelaide think me so childish! I hardly remember what I have written about him. But whatever it was, how is it possible for any one with sense to imagine that I should be' . . . Here she stopped, for she found it difficult to express what she exactly meant. 'Why, I have hardly spoken to him twenty times since he came. At first I thought him very pleasant and agreeable, but lately he has been in an unfriendly humour to me, and as tiresome as possible, and now Aunt Adelaide comes and says *that* is dangerous. I do think as people grow old they grow foolish, and yet Aunt Adelaide is one of the wisest people I know. And then she takes it for granted that he is over

head and ears in love with me! And says . . . let me see, what does she say? "I understand quite well, my sweet Beatrice, although your modesty prevents your hinting it that *ce pauvre jeune savant* adores the ground upon which you walk; and, without flattering you, I don't wonder at it. That the tutor should admire a beautiful girl he is daily in the society of, and that she should, to a certain extent, accept this admiration, is, as I say, very natural. But remember, dear girl, that this poor tutor is, after all, a man with feelings and inclinations like others, though he is of simple origin, and in a dependent position. And now, dear sweet little Beatrice, don't be angry with your old Aunt for her warning." '

Beatrice laid down the letter.

'What is one to think of such a letter?' said she, as if she were speaking to some one. 'Carlos says I am old-fashioned, and calls me Madame Rococo. I wonder what he would say to this? "He adores the ground on which I walk!" ' added she, as a sarcastic expression curled her lip. 'If he does that, he shows it in a queer way. It's much more likely that he can't endure me, and I

am quite sure that I *hate* him, and that I wish he were . . .'

She broke off; for her Aunt's words came to her memory. Was her Aunt not right? What right had she to be thinking about him at all.

'Aunt Adelaide will drive me crazy,' she thought. 'Before her letter came I never thought of Mr. Nordén; and now she comes and says I do. But I won't allow her any such liberty. It may be she is old and my father's sister, but for all that she shall not offend me again. It's really too impertinent; yes, too impertinent! and I shall write and tell her so at once.' She rose and went to her writing-table. Had she done what she intended, and written to her Aunt in the mood she was now in, the letter would not have made the old Aunt believe she had made a mistake. But the letter was not written.

There was one trait in Beatrice's character which was very beautiful—she was honest and true. She was passionate and self-willed, and had many other faults; but through them all shone this one characteristic of her nature—her intense truthfulness not only towards others, but to herself as well.

She sat down; she was very agitated, and her breath came short and quick. Many girls would have found relief in tears; but Beatrice rarely wept, and this was not an occasion on which tears would have relieved her.

Poor little one! She had a battle to fight with herself—a hard battle—but she did not intend to let herself escape it. After a few moments she rose and went up to the large pier glass which stood in her room. Earnestly, almost solemnly she stood before it as before her judge, and examined herself. It seemed as if, standing there and looking into her own eyes, she lifted a veil from off her heart, and could look straight down into her innermost self.

'I was going to write to Aunt Adelaide,' said the young girl, slowly, as she gazed at her face steadily, 'and tell her that Mr. Nordén is nothing to me. Is that true? Is that quite true?'

The last words she uttered slowly, in a tone as if her weal or woe depended upon their utterance. But before the word 'true' had passed her lips the second time she had received her answer. A crimson blush gathered slowly over her face as she stood and looked, which

deepened and deepened, and then gave place to a sudden paleness as she felt a painful, unknown, strange longing creep over her heart.

There she stood looking; looking in the forlorn hope of some other answer. But none came; she was judged. She loved him—Nils Nordén, the tutor in the house. But that was not all; she had given him her heart, and that too without his asking. Poor Beatrice!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SERENADE ON THE LAKE.

If a little bird could have whispered to Beatrice what was passing in Nordén's room the same evening that she received Aunt Adelaide's letter, she would at least have been saved the humiliating thought that her love was given to one who had no care for her.

About eleven o'clock this same evening Nordén went to his room, and instead of going to bed like the rest of the household, sat down in an easy chair, looking very wretched.

Now there is a great difference between a man and a woman when trouble comes upon them, especially if the trouble has anything to do with the heart. A man tries to throw it off, or seeks to lighten it by sympathy from his friends. Not a day will he allow to pass without help and ease to his suffering if he can find a sympathising ear into which to pour the agony of his grief. But

a woman is not so—she bears her sorrow alone—alone to herself and her God; and rarely, if ever, allows her best and dearest friend to share with her or try to ease the bitterness of the cup she is called upon to drink.

Nordén sat in his arm-chair, looking intensely miserable. 'I'm just a fool!' he said to himself. 'I came here in this dependent position to study life, and the first thing I do is to fall desperately in love with a girl, whom I could never hope to win under any circumstances, but whose affection, in my position as tutor, I neither ought nor can attempt to win. What shall I do? I can't go and say to her brother I am so and so, and I beg for the honour of Fröken Beatrice's hand. I know what I should do in Carlos' place, and if I judge him rightly he would do it. I ought to have gone away from here directly I found out how foolish and crackbrained I was becoming. I could easily have found an excuse. But I stayed on; stayed only to drink deeper and deeper of that bewitching cup of poison I have often heard others describe, but till now I have never tasted —love.

'And now, can't I go away? No! oh no!

I can't: come what will I cannot tear myself away. I now for the first time understand the intense meaning of the expression I had always thought a mere form of words. I cannot *live* away from her!'

He rose up, and went to the window.

'Hopeless love!' muttered he, with his habit of speaking half aloud to himself. 'Hopeless love! or is it only for the tutor Nils Nordén that it *must* be hopeless. Could I win her heart as her equal in birth and riches?'

He stood still, thinking deeply, then added:

'No, I think not. It would make no difference. We are so unlike each other in everything—such a contrast; and yet it is just because she is so different from me that I admire her so much. But it seems to make her shun me. . . . I speak of only living where she is. Shall I then remain here all my life as tutor, and at last become a Dr. Bogarius No. 2?'

As this idea passed through his brain he smiled, walked up and down the room a little, and then returned to the window.

'That first day, when I saw her asleep in her room—asleep in that sunny sweet-perfumed room,

how beautiful all was around her, and she herself the most beautiful thing there! I must have been bewitched that day. Ah, if I could only forget her beauty that day! But it is impossible; besides—I *will* not. Her long black eyelashes, her hand, but more than all her beautiful little foot, which fascinated me as I looked,—all, all bewitched me! I often wonder I did not rush forward, kiss her foot, and then vanish from here for ever!' . . .

'I am a fool, an arrant fool!' he went on muttering as he walked restlessly up and down the room.

'To-night, too, in the boat, when she sang that Spanish song. Can anyone wonder if I go mad!'

The room seemed too close for him. He took his hat, and rushed down the stairs out into the garden, never stopping till he came to the boat-house. Here, loosening a boat, he sprang in, and struck out far from land. It was, by chance, the boat that had been used in the afternoon for the row, and Beatrice's guitar lay at the bottom forgotten; but he did not see it as he took up the oars and rowed out to sea. At first he rowed impetuously, without taking any notice

which way he went. The boat flew over the swaying waves; Nordén did not look around, he only rowed on and on—on, as if to reach Finland was the one purpose of his life. After a while he felt calmer; the bodily exertion had stilled the fever of his mind, and now, resting on his oars, he gazed around him, and saw on the one side the beautiful Baltic, heaving as with a deep breath its swelling rounded waves, silvered by the light of the moon, and on the other side the coast, with its gloomy pine forests, its wide-spreading park trees, its grey cliffs and mountains, all peacefully at rest in the darkness beyond the moon's enchanting presence. And in the heavens above the bright clouds floated noiselessly before the moon, bathing their shadows in the swaying restless sea below. His eyes then wandered to Hafnäs Castle, which lay on the coast, glittering and white against the dark forests around it, and the calm which for a little while had come over him began to die away. He turned the boat round and rowed back again, back as far as the coast, but this time round the other side of the Castle, right under the tower where Beatrice's room lay. He had been here before. Often in

the shadow of the darkness he had sat in a boat under Beatrice's window, dreaming his sweet love's dream. Here he had forgotten her proud look, her cold words, and only remembered her soft voice and beauty. Here, too, he had sometimes seen her at her window, as she stood listening to the waves as they splashed or murmured at the foot of her tower.

But this night, although there was moonlight, he trusted to the lateness of the hour to prevent his being seen. Besides, Beatrice was the only one who slept on this side of the tower, so was the only one who could see the boat and its unhappy owner as he sat there, resting his head on his hands. And if she did see him it would not matter this evening. He almost wished she could, or that anything would happen to put an end to such misery as his. A wild longing seized him to tell her of his love. He sat up, and as he did so his eye fell on the guitar, which had lain forgotten in the boat. He reached out his hand for it, drew it towards him, and striking a few chords he began to sing, and sang out from the depths of his young heart all he felt, offering to his beloved through his song his life and

strength and the tenderness and richness of his first and only love.

In her room, in the stillness of the night, Beatrice heard this song.

The poor girl had had a hard struggle with herself, and she believed she had won the victory. She had told herself that this love which had so unknowingly crept over her should die. She would crush it, root it out, for it humiliated her; and it should never find a resting-place in her heart. That she loved Nils Nordén—nay more, that she loved him unasked—the future should never know; and eternity in its great mercy would forget it. But her heart's bitterest humiliation she could never forget herself, and in agony she tossed on her soft bed as if it had been a bed of torture.

Then floated up to her the soft tones of a guitar from the lake; and as the first words fell on her ear, she became anxiously still. Her whole soul listened to the beautiful jubilant song, and each word sank into her heart and soothed its pain and trouble with the most delicious joy. For to her the song was not only of love, it was a balm to her wounded pride, and told her she was

free—free from the burden her proud womanly heart could hardly bear. She loved him, yes; but now each word, each tone of his voice as he sang rang on her delighted ear, telling her that she was loved in return—loved with a depth and a richness of love she had hardly ever dared to dream might one day be hers.

No wonder then the song quieted her, and a soft gentle feeling of peace stole over her. Her spirit was calm now, and the struggle she had gone through before only made her rejoice all the more over her new-found happiness and strange tender joy. Once, for a little moment, the thought came to her she ought to put away at once this love which had moved her so deeply and appealed to her heart so powerfully, that she ought to treat both song and singer with severity, and not allow herself to be influenced by any such joy; but it was only for a moment. She was so intensely happy! And for this one night, at least, she would enjoy the bliss so unexpectedly given to her. Enjoy it with every pulse and fibre of her being, for to-morrow it would no longer be hers—to-morrow she would have to be hard again. And as the last tones died away, and the

dipping of the oars grew fainter and fainter in the distance, she breathed a deep sigh of heaven-born happiness and peace, and fell asleep. Poor girl! To-morrow the struggle will begin again, in spite of to-night and its great happiness.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEXT DAY.

THE next morning, Nordén was not pleased with himself. He had taken a step which could only bring trouble and discomfort in its train. It was an irresistible feeling which had prompted him to sing out his love to Beatrice, and he had given way to it. But now that he felt calmer and could think over the consequences of his rashness, he was obliged to confess to himself that it would have been far better if he had resisted the temptation. If Beatrice had heard and understood his song, what would she think of him? How should he dare look her in the face? He hardly knew which would be worse, for her to be angry and regard this song as an impertinence, or for her to treat the affair as an amusement, and a subject for her sarcasm and irony. Or, if she told Carlos of the tutor's serenade, what would happen then? Nordén knew quite well that in his position as

tutor, he had not acted honourably or well, and that between him and Carlos there must be an explanation which would be disagreeable for both, but specially for himself.

With these thoughts worrying him, he went down to breakfast, hoping, by a glance at Beatrice's face, to be able to tell at once what his fate would be. But Beatrice was not there. She chose now and then to have her breakfast in her room, and she did so this morning.

Presently, in the course of the conversation, Fröken von Claaken said she thought she had heard the tones of a guitar in the night; they had disturbed her dreams.

'It must have been some one on the lake,' said she. 'It sounded like a guitar. Did any of you hear it?'

Some of the others had heard something, but thought it came from the land side.

'Nonsense!' answered Fröken von Claaken; 'I am quite certain it was from the lake. I thought for a moment I would put my head out of window, and tell whoever it was to go home and go to bed; but I fell asleep.'

'It was well you didn't do that, aunt dear,' said Carlos, laughing. 'Just think, if it was some one giving you a serenade, how distressed and wounded his feelings would have been if he had seen your head out of window, and heard you telling him to go to bed!'

And, as the old lady did not answer him, he went on.

'May I ask a question, sweet aunt; did you intend speaking to your troubadour with or without your nightcap?'

All this was very amusing for the others, but it was torture to poor Nordén; but he was very glad when they at last declared it must have been some one of the peasants going home in his boat, and enjoying the moonlight in this noisy way.

In the course of the morning, Beatrice heard from Fröken von Claaken of the disturbance in the night, and this made her hesitate as to how she should act. Her first thought had been to behave as if nothing had happened, and not to let Nordén know in any way that she had heard and understood his song; and, in the short time which would elapse between now and her winter visit to her aunt in Stockholm, to avoid his presence, and

give him no opportunity for friendly intercourse with her.

But now, through his thoughtlessness, a part of her secret was so near being revealed, that she determined to put an end to the affair at once. He had sung once at her tower; he might do so again, and that would cause her joking and teasing from the others that she could not bear. She could not tell her brother, for then she must have confessed her own weakness; so she at last made up her mind to speak to Nordén herself. She had no mother to advise her; no one who could tell her how very unwise she was to let Nordén know that she had understood his song. For, however cold and severe she might be with him, it was not likely she would be able to make him believe she was angry with him; and, unless he thought this, a hope *would* spring up within him that his love might one day, perhaps, be acceptable.

When they met at dinner they shunned each other's eyes, and spoke very little. Afterwards, when the others dispersed and left the drawing-room, Beatrice sat still on a sofa, and Nordén stood by the window, gazing out on the sea.

All was still in the room. Nordén stood immoveable. He knew, though he could not see her, that she sat on the sofa, thoughtful and silent. But he could not see how her eyes were turned towards him with a soft, tender, painful expression of longing. He knew something was coming, and his face was very pale.

In a few moments, which seemed to him a long time, he heard her clear, calm voice say,

'Mr. Nordén.'

He turned round hastily, and went to the sofa where she sat. Beatrice had for a second lowered her eyes; but now she raised them again, and saw that he stood before her—not looking at her, but with his head down, and his whole appearance as of one waiting to be judged.

'I believe I am doing right when I tell you, Mr. Nordén, that I heard your song last night. If I said that I did not understand it, I should be telling an untruth, and you would not believe me. It was impossible to misunderstand what you meant. Now, I just ask you, how could you allow yourself to act in such a manner towards me?'

She waited for him to answer. But what could



he say? He had expected such a question from Carlos, but not from her. Should he fall on his knees, tell his love, and who he was? But he knew, if he did, he would only make things worse than they were. He knew, if he said he was ten times a prince, Beatrice would not listen to him. She did not speak to him as a tutor, but as her equal, as a gentleman, and asked him how he could allow himself to act in such a manner towards herself. He had nothing to answer; so he was silent.

A few moments Beatrice waited for an answer to her question. Then, in the same cold, slow voice, she continued,

'You do not try to excuse yourself, for you cannot. Now, I have one piece of advice to offer you, and this is the first and last time I shall speak of this to you. Forget what has happened. Forget *all*. When I know you have done that, I will forgive you.'

She slightly inclined her head forward to intimate to him he could go; and, without a word, he turned from her, and went.

As he thought over Beatrice's words and manner on this occasion, he was puzzled to

understand how she felt towards him. One thing was quite certain, she was not *very* angry with him; had she been so she would have chosen some other way of punishing him. And then her voice, as she spoke to him, though cold and firm, had not a trace of sarcasm in it; and her manner, usually so haughty, was all but humble in its beseeching earnestness. Any way, as the day went on he began to feel less faint-hearted. He could hardly himself explain how it was, but since Beatrice had spoken to him, everything went better; his heart felt happier, his spirits returned, and he gave himself up to the happy dreams which always follow youth's first love.

CHAPTER XV.

CARLOS AND SIGNE ADMIRE THE SUNRISE.

CARLOS had always loved Signe ever since he could remember. As children they had played at husband and wife; and the affection Carlos had always given to his stepmother's golden-headed little daughter had gradually deepened with time into a strong love—love such as a man gives to the woman whom he hopes to make his wife. When Carlos discovered the change in his feelings towards the little playmate of his boyhood, he spoke to his father on the subject, and begged him to sanction their betrothment as soon as Signe should be confirmed. But his father, though delighted at the prospect of such a marriage between his son and his beloved little stepdaughter, thought it right to prove his son's constancy and affection; so sent him away to travel in foreign lands for a year or two, that he might see the world, and at the same time test the depth of his

love for Signe by frequent intercourse with other young ladies.

Carlos went; but, by his father's express desire, gave no hint or sign to Signe of the state of his affections. Carlos was absent for two years, travelling here and there on the Continent, and then he returned to his northern home. Time and absence had only increased his affection for Signe. During these two years she had grown more beautiful, more womanly, and more loveable than ever. Since his return in the spring, he had sought in every way to try and win her heart; but she was so shy of expressing any special preference for him, that he was uncertain whether she returned his affection. At last he made up his mind he would ask her, and put an end to his uncertainty and daily torture.

One lovely morning, a few days after the interview between Beatrice and Nordén, mentioned in the last chapter, Carlos stood on the terrace in front of the house with his hands behind his back, thinking deeply. The sun was just peeping over the horizon, sending forth a few glittering rays over the sea. The grey-white mist, which had hung upon the water undisturbed by the slightest

breath of wind, was fast dying away before the morning's coming splendour, and all the earth around was just awakening from the sleep of night to the fresh, bright influence of another day. The evening before, Carlos had begged Signe to allow him to row her out on the lake the following morning to see the sun rising; and he had determined, when she laughingly promised to go with him, to seize this opportunity of knowing the state of her heart towards him. He stood on the terrace a long, long while, waiting for her, and wondering how he should manage to say all that he wished to say. Did she love him?—that was the question he wanted to have answered; and yet, now, as he waited for her, it seemed difficult to know how to ask such a very simple question.

But, as he heard Signe's step, he murmured, 'Well, it's of no use thinking beforehand what to say; I shall trust to the inspiration of the moment for the right words.' Signe came up to him with her hat in her hand, and the fresh morning air playing with her curls. She had on a pretty white morning dress, with no other ornament than a red flower she had gathered on her

road to him, and fastened in her bosom with the dewdrops still clinging to it.

'Oh, how very lovely!' she exclaimed, as she stood by his side and looked at the picture before them.

The mist had vanished, and the sun in its glory had deluged the lake and all its little islands in one golden flush of exquisite beauty.

Carlos gazed for a moment on the scene she pointed to, and then turned and looked tenderly at the bright young creature at his side. She was wrapt in wonder and delight at the beautiful picture. Her eye wandered with rapture over the morning's unfolding beauty; but her thoughts went up to the Maker of all things, Himself the most beautiful of all, and in her heart she thanked Him for giving her here on earth such wondrous beauty to behold, to feel, and to enjoy. For a few moments she was silent; then, turning to her companion, she noticed his earnest, tender gaze, and the blood flew up to her face as she said hastily,

'Come; let us go to the boat, and be quick.'

And, hand in hand, like two children, they ran

down to the boat-house, which lay on the other side of the garden.

Signe was full of fun, and as cheerful as a little bird. She enjoyed this early row, and, seating herself at the end of the boat, she said she would steer, and go the way she liked best.

'You need do nothing but row, dear Carlos. I shall steer quite well. Don't turn round. There, that's right.'

But Carlos wanted to begin his lovemaking, and was not at all inclined, however charming such a captain might be, to obey orders which made him sit with his feet on a board and his hands occupied with two clumsy oars, working as hard as he could. At first he rowed on, she chatting to him about everything that came into her head, he hardly saying a word. Presently he rested on his oars.

'Why do you do that, my oarsman brave, my oarsman swift?' asked Signe, as she took hold of the two cords of the rudder.

'Because the oarsman wants to talk to his helmsman.' The words were simple enough; but there was something in the tone of his voice which made her look at him. As she did so, she

understood in an instant what was coming. She cast down her eyes; but an amused expression crept round her mouth as she listened to what he was saying.

'It's very strange; but I find it more difficult to talk to you on this subject than it would be to a person I had not known so long or so intimately. I hardly understand how it is——'

He hesitated, not knowing what next to say.

Signe looked up quietly, and said,

'What do you want to talk about, dear Carlos?'

This question made him hesitate still more. He could not answer, 'I want to make love to you,' yet he must go on now he had once begun; so he answered,

'You shall know presently;' and then added, 'We have all been brought up together as if we were real sisters and brothers, and it's hard to think we are not related, you and I; I mean—— Have you ever thought about it, Signe?'

'I have not often thought about it, but I have known it. You and Beatrice have been like a true brother and sister to us always.'

'Yes, yes! Beatrice, yes. Now, I have been thinking, Signe, that it would be very pleasant

for Beatrice and for me also—no, I don't mean pleasant for me; I mean that——'

'What is it that would be so unpleasant for you? I don't understand,' said Signe looking down at the rippling water.

'Unpleasant! I didn't say that, or it was not what I meant, if I said so. I wanted to say that Beatrice would be happy and grateful if you would be her——'

'It's very amiable of Beatrice to think about what I shall be,' interrupted Signe, wickedly. 'But don't you see how wet you are getting?'

She pointed to the oars on which his arms were leaning heavily, causing the water to run down from the blade on to his knees, which were quite wet through. Carlos, whose sense of the ridiculous never forsook him even when he himself was the cause, cast his oars into the water, asked Signe to row, and could hardly help laughing as he took his pocket-handkerchief and dried his knees as well as he could.

All went on right enough as long as they spoke on indifferent topics; but, directly Carlos returned to the subject nearest his heart, something went wrong with the oars in a moment. One oar

slipped from her hand; and Carlos, in the midst of a sentence, had to lean half out of the boat to reach it; and then, when he began again, the other slipped away also, and he had to leave off what he was saying again, and catch it ere it floated beyond his reach.

It vexed him to be interrupted so often, and he said impatiently,

'I thought you could row well, Signe?'

'Well, so I can generally; but to-day I can't keep the time even. I fancy I must be nervous. Keep time for me; perhaps then it will go better.'

'Very well. Now then! One, two. Little slower! One, two! one, two!'

The boat went steadily at last. They directed their course homewards, for it was late, and breakfast must long since have been ready.

One, two! one, two! Nearer and nearer they came to land, and Carlos's hope began to fade. Each time he ceased counting, the oars went wrong; he knew it was done on purpose, but that didn't help him. They came near the landing-place, she rowing as hard as she could, with fun dancing in her eyes, but her mouth quietly repeating after him, 'One, two!' 'In the boat-house,'

he thought, 'I will try again. But I shall have to be quick.'

But, however 'quick' he meant to be, Signe was before him. As the boat glided to the plank she laid down the oars, sprang on the bridge, and ran off up through the garden as fast as she could go. Carlos was astonished; but, without waiting a moment, he jumped on the bridge, left the boat to its fate, and went after her.

He saw her white dress ahead of him suddenly vanish round a corner; he turned off to meet her, and——caught her in his arms. She had hoped to hide from him in the shelter of a wide-spreading bush which grew under a large pear-tree. He held her to his breast, and for a moment she stood still, with her eyes cast down.

'What do you want?' she said, softly.

'I want you for my wife,' he answered in the same tone.

She looked up in his face, and an amused expression danced round her mouth as she asked,

'Won't that be unpleasant for you?'

He made a gesture of impatience.

'Is it only because you wish me to be *real* sister to Beatrice?'

'Well, I must confess that I di
fairly with my friend Birgir. He
the body, so that I thought he wo
me in two by my middle; so
benefit of a trick I had learnt at
we rolled over one another down
I fell uppermost, and Birgir got
head, which made it easy for
down.'

'Ah, yes, Mr. Nordén,' said C
too modest to tell me much about
take care, I shall ask Birgir him
morrow, or rather I should say
already half-past five in the morn
This conversation was held do
home, where they very soon after
A few hours later on in the m
were brought into the courtyar
bailiffs had arrived, and were o
orders of the Count to conduct
prison. Carlos went down and s
'You are living the life of vagab
stealers,' said he, 'and we have c
act; so that it is quite in my pow
severely punished. You say that

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CRAYFISH BAY, AND WHAT HAPPENED THERE.

NORDÉN had written and told his mother of his affection for Beatrice; also of his mad serenade on the lake, and the conversation which followed the next day. These letters would not be interesting to any one but a fond mother, so we forbear tiring the reader with a perusal of them. Mrs. Nordén's answers were loving and sympathetic; but she did not express any strong desire to clasp Beatrice in her arms as her son's wife. Perhaps, if she had spoken out her heart's wish, it would have been Signe she would have chosen as her future daughter-in-law; but she did not say so, and now Signe was engaged to Carlos, it was, of course, too late to express her opinion, or try to guide her son's inclinations. Besides, she was far too good and discreet a mother to separate herself from her son by showing dislike to the one he loved, so she kept her anxiety to herself, and

trusted to time and opportunity to soften her distress.

In the meanwhile the days and weeks were passing on, and the end of September was close at hand. The weather was still beautiful, and the evenings soft and warm—so warm that even Fröken von Claaken could not make any objection when a party was proposed to go on a fishing expedition as far as the Crayfish Bay, a little inlet of the sea on the other side of the mountain, where a few years before crayfish had been reared. These little fish are usually caught by torchlight, as they love the light, which attracts them up towards the shore, and in the shallow water it is easy to catch them with the hand, though one has to be careful not to be bitten by their claws Six o'clock was the hour chosen for starting, and they were all to meet in the garden at the foot of the stone steps, on the west side of the Castle. The servants stood waiting, provided with dry sticks, torches, baskets, and everything else necessary for the fishing. Nordén was at the rendezvous first. Then Beatrice came alone; and in spite of the gathering darkness, she easily recognised who it was before her. For a few

moments they were both silent, each seeking for something to say to put an end to the awkwardness of the situation, yet finding nothing. It was the first time they were alone since the memorable day Beatrice spoke to Nordén of his love. They had often enough talked to each other since then, but never without some one else being near. Presently Beatrice forced herself to say—

'Do you know, Mr. Nordén, how far it is to Crayfish Bay?'

'About three-quarters of an hour's walk, and most of it up-hill,' answered Nordén; and then he added: 'There is another way, that Gustaf and I go sometimes. It's much shorter, but too difficult for ladies.'

'Why so?' asked Beatrice, more for something to say than from any other reason.

'Because, instead of the road winding round the rocks, it goes straight up over them; and there is one point a little way up which is so very steep, about ten feet high, that one has to climb it by planting one's feet in the crevices of the rocks. Farther on towards the sea, two cliffs block up the road, having only a tiny path between them so narrow that a broad-shouldered

person must pass sideways through, or else he would be jammed in.'

Norden described the road minutely to pass the time away till the others joined them. Beatrice had seated herself on a garden bench, and shaded by the darkness, she gave very little attention to what he was saying. His words, however, came back to her in full force later on in the evening.

While he spoke of the roughness of the path, and the big stones and fallen trees scattered over it, Signe, Carlos, and Gustaf arrived at the meeting place.

As soon as little Gustaf heard what Nordén was saying, he exclaimed—

'Ah, yes! Do let us go *our* way to the bay. It's so much pleasanter!'

'No, thank you,' answered his tutor. 'Our way is all very well in daylight; but in the darkness I have no inclination to risk either your life or mine there.'

Henrik now came up, so as they were all together they started. Fröken von Claaken had at first thought of joining the party; but the steep up-hill work was too trying for her, so she stayed at home with Elfva. They passed through the

garden, and a few minutes' walking brought them to the path which led to the bay. It was a tolerably steep ascent, and the country around grew wilder and more woody at each step. The track was so narrow two could not walk abreast, so they followed one the other, preceded by the lantern-bearers. It would have been rather dangerous to light the torches in the forest, as the wood around was dry, and might easily ignite. Carlos and Nordén chatted as they went along, but the girls seemed inclined to be silent. Gustaf thought it rather tiresome to go so slowly, so he persuaded a couple of the torch-bearers to hasten on in front with him, and reach the bay sooner. The others followed slowly, not to weary themselves, and after about an hour's walk they arrived at the top of the mountain, and, looking down on the other side, they were surprised at the sight below them. The little inlet lay before them, surrounded by a framework of dark forest and the white sand and stones which were spread along its shore. Sheltered from the wind by the forest trees and cliffs around it, the water was as still and clear as if it lay in an enchanted sleep. Gustaf had amused himself by lighting all the

torches, which he had given to several little peasant boys to hold at various points on each side of the bay. The smoking torches, whose flames cast into the glittering water long shadows of the figures standing on the shores, the shouts and voices, which in this solitary place riveted the ear through the stillness of the evening, all conspired to render the scene somewhat mysterious and supernatural. Signe gazed on the picture for some moments in silence, and then exclaimed—

'It looks exactly as if we had surprised a company of hobgoblins, or mountain sprites, busy drawing a supply of water to carry off with them into the depths of the mountains.'

'Yes; or perhaps gathering a supply of crayfish, to be eaten in the winter as crayfish omelettes,' said Carlos, solemnly, but with a glance full of fun at Signe.

'I hope the mountain sprites are not good judges of crayfish,' said Nordén, in the same grave tone; 'for if they are, we shall not find many left in this bay.'

'They don't care much for water,' said Henrik. 'They work so hard, they like stronger refresh-

ment than water. But let us go down and help the imps there—shall we?'

They did so, and were all soon hard at work. At first Gustaf was somewhat afraid of the little creatures' claws, for they squeezed his fingers, which made him give a good loud shout; but soon he learnt to seize them by the back, where they could not touch him, and then he managed very well. The men did not care, but caught the fish sometimes two and three at a time, letting them hang by their claws to their fingers, and giving them a little knock to make them let go, as they threw them into the baskets, where many of their unlucky companions already were.

Beatrice and Signe sat on the shore, sometimes lighting fresh torches, sometimes visiting the baskets, to see they did not get too full, and replacing them with empty ones when they did.

They had all enjoyed the fun for about an hour, when an accident happened which put an end to the amusement for the evening.

Beatrice left Signe filling the baskets, and wandered away alone a little farther upwards on the shore. She turned her head to look back at the busy party, when her eye was attracted by a pic-

ture which pleased her so much she stood still to admire it. Out on a jutting cliff, or rather huge stone, far in the sea, with one foot resting on a smaller stone in front of him, the other hanging carelessly in the water, sat Nordén. His fish-basket stood near him. The water was lit up for many yards around him by the torches, which had been fastened into the cliffs, and were drooping over the bay, whose still waters reflected back very distinctly both the flame and smoke of the burning wood. Immense sparks continually fell into the bay, and were quenched with a soft hissing sound from the water. Nordén must have been tired with stooping after the fish, for he was doing nothing—not attending a bit to his work, but apparently lost in his own thoughts. Beatrice remained a few moments gazing, as she imagined, on the picture, but in reality upon him; and then, with a deep sigh, she turned to go on farther. As she did so, a loud shriek was heard from Signe. She started back, thinking her sister was in danger, when a flame darted around her. For a second she thought it came from the ground on which she stood; but Signe's agonising cry,

'Beatrice, your dress is on fire!' showed her where the danger was.

She had not noticed that near where she stood was a worn-down, half-quenched torch. The flame had caught her dress, and when Signe gave her first scream the fire had gained force, and was burning all her skirts.

The shriek woke Nordén out of his reverie; he sprang from his stone towards Beatrice, but before he could reach her she had rescued herself. Without a moment's hesitation she sprang straight into the bay. The flames, as she jumped, seemed to gain strength and spring up all over her; but as soon as she was in the water and had taken one dip down, covering her head entirely with the waves, the danger was all over, and the fire extinguished before any harm had happened to herself.

Nordén watched her bravery from the shore, and was astonished at her presence of mind and courage. It was all done so quickly he had no time to say a word; but then, when he saw the fire was out, a sudden thought seemed to seize him; he whispered a few words to Signe, turned suddenly round and vanished in the darkness.

Carlos had been fishing on the other side of a cliff, so did not see his sister's danger; but when he came back and found what had happened, he was rejoiced at her escape, and very proud of the courage she had shown under such trying circumstances. 'My brave little sister,' he exclaimed, as he wanted to clasp her in his arms, but she laughingly waved him away, saying—

'Don't you see your "brave little sister" is as wet as a sea-nymph? Those who touch me will be severely punished!'

And that was very natural. Beatrice had by her own resolution saved herself from burning, but her present state was not a very pleasant one. Her skirts were nearly all burnt; her jacket had escaped, but that, like all the rest, was soaked through with water.

'What will you do now?' said Carlos, who was accustomed to his sister's attending to her own wants. 'Do you think you can go home as you are, or shall we send for some clothes whilst you sit and wait in the hut up there?'

She thought a moment.

'I fear I cannot walk home in these wet things,' said she. 'If you send, I will go and wait in the hut.'

'Mr. Nordén has already gone,' broke in Signe. 'He promised to be back in less time than you could walk home in, and he advised me to have a big fire lighted up in that little hut, and take you there that you may not catch cold.'

Beatrice, at first, did not like this arrangement. Like many other young ladies, she would much rather have gone home barefooted, than let her lover go after shoes and stockings for her; a brother or a servant is quite another thing.

'Has Mr. Nordén gone to fetch my clothes?' asked she, and they saw it did not please her. 'Would it not have been better to have sent a servant?'

'Yes; I said so to him; but Mr. Nordén answered that he could go much quicker than anyone else, as he knew a short cut through the forest.'

'Short cut!' called out Gustaf. 'Which way did he go, Signe?'

'That way,' she answered, pointing with her hand.

'Then he has gone the rocky path,' answered Gustaf, 'and will be back almost directly.'

The rocky path! That was the road he had

described to Beatrice before they started, in the garden. All that he had then said came back to her. She remembered how he had refused to go with Gustaf that way in the dark, as it was always dangerous in daylight; and now, in the dark, he had taken that road. Had Beatrice been of a nervous and sentimental nature, she would have become very anxious for her loved one's safety, and, at the same time, very happy that he had dared to risk his life for her; but she had never known what it was to feel nervous for herself or others. She could understand a danger; but she could not feel it.

When she heard that Nordén had gone this way for her sake that she might have the things she needed half an hour sooner, she felt a strange happiness come over her. She ought not to think of him; but she did it in spite of herself. She would have done anything for one she loved—that was her nature. Also she would let one who really loved her wait upon her, if necessary: that was also in her nature. It was not, therefore, that she demanded a sacrifice for herself; but that she could not love anyone who was not *willing* to offer himself a sacrifice for the one he professed

to love. When Beatrice was twelve years old she had once read of a man who had let his wife be saved from a great danger by some friend instead of going to her rescue himself. The wife was pleased that her husband had not risked his own life to spare hers, and told him so. Beatrice could never understand this: she scorned the man, and scorned the woman also for loving a man who could act so cowardly.

'I would never have spoken to him again!' she exclaimed, as she read the story. 'Never!' Her ideas of love were in sympathy with Lovelace, when he says,—

I could not love thee half so well, loved I not honour more.

The little hut lay about a hundred yards from the bay: it was quite a ruin, being without doors or windows, and a part of the roof; but the stove was still there, and in it they soon made a roaring fire, round which the party gathered. Beatrice could not enjoy her thoughts with the chatting going on around her. Do what she would she could not prevent herself from following Nordén through the wild rocky path, over the mountain, and down the forest glen back to Hafnäs. The

others thought she was tired and exhausted after her danger, so let her sit quiet and in peace. Her face was turned towards the sparkling wood fire, and in it her eyes followed him all the rough way. He ran lightly through the forest, jumping from stone to stone, and avoiding the trees which had fallen between them. His speed increased as the descent became greater, and when he reached the narrow passage between the rocks, he scarcely gave himself time to turn and pass in sideways, as he had so well described it. How he could see his road was a mystery. Once he was on the point of making a mistake, and rushing on down a precipice when he thought the ground was straight before him. With wonderful agility he checked himself, let himself slip down the mountain, and got no more harm from the fall than the discovery of a new way down the dangerous cliff. Now all the worst perils were passed. He sprang easily over the fences which enclosed the garden, and in a few moments he was talking to Fröken von Claaken, and explaining to her what he had come for. His impatience was sorely put to the test as he had to answer so many questions. 'Tell me truly has anything dangerous happened?'

'No, no; but Fröken Beatrice has got very wet, and requires dry things; please be quick.' And in a few minutes Annette handed to him a bundle, and he had started on his return journey.

But this time it was up-hill and not down, and with things to carry. Up-hill, and with more force required, though with no less haste than he went down-hill!

But one thing Beatrice could not see, as she sat and stared in the fire. Nordén carried in his hand a little pair of boots, which Annette had not tied up in the bundle. Many times on the road, but especially when he felt exhausted and his lungs worked as if the vessels would burst, he raised them to his lips and imprinted a kiss on them—the little boots which covered her feet—and then that always seemed to give him fresh strength to rush onwards with greater speed.

Twenty minutes had hardly gone since the accident on the shore, when a servant entered the hut with the things Annette had sent for her young mistress.

Beatrice looked up, at first somewhat astonished, for she had expected to see Nordén before her; but in a moment she understood why he had not

brought in the things himself, and she was truly grateful to him for sparing her the double embarrassment his presence would have caused her. She hardly knew how she should show him her gratitude for what he had done without—yes, without—ah! she did not dare trust herself to go on. The opportunity was farther off than she imagined for thanking Nordén.

A little while after the party started homewards, and reached Hafnäs without any trouble.

On the road they were all rather surprised not to see Nordén. Some said he was behind, so they waited for him to come up; but as he did not appear, Carlos observed—

'He is, as usual, very shy, and keeps behind so as not to be thanked. I looked for him directly I left the hut, but no one knew where he was. Never mind now; at tea I shall catch him, and then thank him.'

But at tea-time the tutor sent down to say that he must be excused, as he was not quite well. This made them all very sorry, especially when Gustaf came down from Nordén's room and said his tutor looked pale, did not want any tea, and had sent him away directly.

Fröken von Claaken sent Gustaf up again to ask if Mr. Nordén would have something warm. The little fellow brought back for answer, 'No, he would have nothing, but would go to bed immediately.'

'Well, if he is not better in the morning I shall go and see him,' said the little old lady. 'I daresay he has caught a cold through getting his feet wet whilst fishing. I have a famous remedy for such things, and he shall have some in the morning.'

They all knew of this famous remedy, and Nordén was pitied now more than he was before.

Nordén was in reality much to be pitied. In his eagerness to help Beatrice he had trusted too much to his youthful strength, and had severely injured his chest. Up to the last he had performed his knightly duty in her service with all his heart, giving her willingly of his strength unasked and unknown. But now his work was done he felt again a sensation he had had a warning of on his wild journey down the precipitous path, that something was wrong with his chest, though he knew not what.

He dragged himself into the forest behind, and

sat down on an old trunk of a tree. He felt strangely weak, with a sensation he had never known before that threatened to overpower him. Once he sank down on the earth, and laid there with his eyes shut for some moments. Then he struggled up again with a terrible effort, and slowly crept towards the hut. Fortunately, one or two of the men had lingered behind the others, putting out the fire in the ruined old hut. As they saw Nordén come towards them, looking so white and ill, one of them started forward to help him, threw his strong arms round him, and half-carried, half-dragged him down the hill. Nordén was too ill to notice who this man was, though he knew him well. The same arms had been round him once before, but not as now—tenderly and kindly, and to help him. It was Nordén's old enemy that night of the fight with the broom-handle stealers, Birgir, who was now a steady, respectable, hard-working man, and who had been told by Carlos to carry the fish baskets to the Bay this evening, and to attend to the torches. He it was who now supported Nordén as gently as his mother would; and when he saw how pale and weak the young fellow was, he took him up in his arms and carried him over each stone and each

roughness of the road, and would not put him down till he at last laid him on his bed in his own room at Hafnäs. Nordén felt better now. He hoped that it was only faintness he was suffering from, and that after a night's rest he would be all right again in the morning; so he begged Birgir, whom he recognised now, not to say a word about his illness to anyone of the family, and then, smiling, he added,

'The help you have given me was more than I expected from you. Thank you, kind Birgir!'

'Yes,' answered the smith, who quite understood to what Nordén referred, 'that night's work was the greatest blessing that ever happened to me. It has made an honest man of me, I hope. If you, sir, had not cast me into the ditch, I never should have been what I am now; and I do mean to work hard always.'

And the giant smiled as he spoke, and looked kindly down on the young fellow lying on the bed. Then, as he was going away, he asked again if he might go and fetch the doctor.

'No, thank you,' answered Nordén, as before; 'I shall be all right in the morning. Good-night, Birgir, and thank you very much.'

CHAPTER XVII.

DOCTOR PULSANDER RECEIVES HIS ORDERS.

But Birgir did go to the doctor. He was quite certain in his own mind that Nordén required help more than he could give him. So, immediately upon leaving his room, he started for the next town, where the doctor lived, and reached there after two hours' walking. Dr. Pulsander was the physician lately appointed by Government to this town, and to his house the giant smith now directed his steps.

It was very late in the evening, and the doctor sat in his easy-chair enjoying a little quiet and rest after a hard day's work, and hoping that his patients would require him no more that night, but sleep well, and leave him in peace.

On the table at his side lay the daily papers and a glass with something in it that looked very much as if it were brandy-and-water.

Dr. Pulsander was a man about forty, short and

rather stout, with little good-humoured eyes, which stared at the world in general through a pair of large round spectacles. He had the reputation of being a very successful, clever man, and was unmarried. It had just struck eleven when some one knocked at his door and walked in without waiting for an answer. The doctor looked up from his paper, and said, impatiently, 'What do you want?'

'Some one is ill,' answered Birgir.

'Where?'

'Over at Hafnäs Castle.'

'Indeed!' said the doctor, a little more amiably than he had hitherto spoken. He had not yet been sent for to Hafnäs, so was better pleased to go there than elsewhere.

He took a draught of toddy, and then said,

'Is the carriage a closed one?'

This was a question Birgir was not quite prepared to answer, although he knew it would come. The first question a doctor in the country always asks, when he is sent for, is what kind of carriage the messenger has brought for him. But Birgir, in his eagerness to fetch the doctor, had not thought of this till he arrived at the house, and it was then

too late. After a second's hesitation, he answered, 'No!'

So the doctor immediately thought it must be the little open trap he had seen often enough in the town from Hafnäs, and, stirring his toddy with the spoon, he asked, 'Who is ill?'

'The young professor, the tutor,' answered the smith.

'Who is that? I have not heard of him. I don't know much about Hafnäs.'

But Birgir's patience was fast ebbing away. He had seen a few drops of blood on Nordén's coat, and he felt sure they came from his lungs; besides, any one could see how ill the poor fellow was, so he answered the doctor in such a gruff, decided tone, with 'Please to be quick,' that Dr. Pulsander rose up immediately and prepared himself for his journey to Hafnäs.

He drank off his glass of toddy, and, as he did so, looked at Birgir, who was standing just inside the door watching him with increasing impatience. 'A very peculiar messenger,' thought the doctor; 'they must have sent the first who turned up. It must be a serious illness which makes them

anxious at Hafnäs. I must find out more about it on the road.'

He was now ready, and, blowing out the lights, he left the room, followed by Birgir, and went out on to the steps in the street. Here he stood still. 'Where is the carriage?' he asked.

Whilst the doctor was dressing, Birgir had had good time to make up his mind how to act. He had noticed that when Dr. Pulsander heard it was the tutor who required his attention, he was not quite so pleased as if it had been one of the family itself; and Birgir was quite sure that if he knew that there was no carriage he would have deferred his visit till the morning. 'It stands at the entrance to the town,' answered Birgir, very politely. 'The coachman thought it was too late to wake up the people with the noise of wheels rattling over the stones, so he drew up outside. Will you walk so far and get in there?'

Arrived at the town gate, though the gate was no longer there, the doctor began to look around for the carriage, and, as they walked on and still none was visible, he turned suddenly to Birgir and said, angrily,

'What do you mean by this? There is no carriage.'

'No,' answered the smith quietly, 'there is no carriage, so we must *walk* to Hafnäs.'

A delightful state of affairs for poor Dr. Pulsander! He had left his pleasant, comfortable room, his papers and toddy, to find himself near midnight upon a dark, lonely, country road, alone with a gigantic man who might, for all he knew to the contrary, have inveigled him into some trap to plunder him, or perhaps to murder him. All this darted through his mind quick as lightning. He did not know what to do; he had only one weapon in his pocket, that was his lancet, but that would not be of much use to defend him in case he tried to use violence. He would not go on; he would try and treat with his undeclared enemy, and get home again as fast as possible. It did not seem to enter his head that the man was honest, and a real messenger from Hafnäs. There was no carriage—that was proof positive; the whole thing was an excuse for some hidden bad purpose.

But Birgir evidently divined what was passing

in his mind, for he said, respectfully, but in a decided tone of voice—

'Mr. Doctor, I will do you no harm; and if you will only walk willingly to Hafnäs nothing shall happen to you. Seven miles on a good road won't hurt you, but perhaps do you good.'

'But if I won't go willingly?' said the doctor.

'Then I shall be obliged to make you,' answered Birgir; 'for go to Hafnäs you shall, if I carry you all the way. And if I carry you, I can't promise how it will be. It may happen sometimes that your head might hang down, or your feet, *and not in the most* comfortable position. Shall I try now?' and the smith made a step forward which caused the doctor to start back to the edge of the road, and say hastily,

'No, no! I would much rather walk.'

There was that in the smith's manner which made Dr. Pulsander begin to fancy he had made a mistake. Any way, he felt he was in the man's power, so must submit to his will.

Once he tried to escape by saying he had many sick patients in the town who would need his presence before morning. But Birgir only answered this remark by walking a little nearer to

him. So there was nothing else to be done but go on, and trust that all was right, and that time would bring a proper explanation of such very strange conduct on the part of this huge man walking at his side. Birgir was delighted that at last the doctor seemed to have resigned himself to his fate and made no further fuss. He did not think that perhaps unpleasant consequences to himself might follow his rough handling of the doctor; all he troubled about was getting help as quickly as possible to the young man for whom he felt a strange affection and respect, and who was now ill and suffering, and greatly in need of a doctor's skilful care. The smith's heart was a good and grateful one. He thought not for himself, but for others.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NIGH UNTÒ DEATH.

CARLOS, Count Falkenheim, lord of Hafnäs and all its appurtenances, was enjoying a sweet and peaceful sleep the morning after his fishing. In the middle of a beautiful dream, in which a golden-haired maiden was just telling him what he loved of all things to hear, he felt himself by some rude shock drawn away from her, and opening his eyes he saw standing by his bed his Swiss valet, who had been for a quarter of an hour past trying in vain to awaken him.

Carlos was not very pleased at being wrenched so suddenly from his sweet dreams; but, as soon as his eyes were sufficiently open to observe the man's face, he saw there an expression which plainly told him there was a cause for the early unusual disturbance.

'What's the matter?' asked he in French, the language he always spoke with his attendant.

'But, Sir Count, it is that the tutor is dangerously ill, and that the doctor says he will not recover,' answered Athanase, hurriedly.

'Ill—the doctor—not recover! What do you mean?' exclaimed the Count, who hardly knew whether he were dreaming or awake.

'Yes, Monsieur le Comte; unhappily the danger is very serious, from what the doctor says.'

'When did the doctor come—and what doctor?'

'In the night, about two o'clock. He was fetched, from what I hear, by that big smith who was forgiven for stealing, if you will kindly remember—'

'Birgir? yes, I remember. But what has he to do with it?' asked Carlos, impatiently.

'He it was who carried Mr. Nordén back from the bay, and then went after the doctor. The servants say that he handled the doctor rather rudely, and obliged him to come all the way on foot. But the doctor says this morning that he has forgiven the smith his rough manners on account of the great danger Mr. Nordén was in. Had he not been sent for till early this morning it would have been too late. Poor young fellow!'

added Athanase, who, with all the servants, liked Nordén very much.

During this conversation Carlos had hastily jumped up and dressed as quickly as he could. With grief and sorrow in his heart he went up to the tutor's room to see him.

He stayed there a short time, and then went down and knocked at his sister Beatrice's door. He went in, and met Annette, who told him her mistress was up but not yet dressed.

Almost as she spoke the door of the sleeping apartment opened, and Beatrice herself came in. She had on a white dressing-gown, which she had wrapped round her when she heard her brother's voice in the outer room. A pair of red morocco slippers lined with eider down covered her small bare feet, and her luxuriant hair was just fastened at the back in a way which gave to her beautiful head a rich, classical appearance.

She was very pale, but she showed in no other way what she felt, as her brother asked,

'Have you heard what has happened?'

'Yes,' she answered, quick and short, as if afraid she would lose her self-possession if she said any-

thing more. Both were silent for a moment, after which Beatrice asked, in her turn,

'Have you been to see him?'

'I have just come from his room.'

'How was he?'

'I did not see him; but he seems to be terribly changed, and he can hardly speak. The doctor says only the very greatest quiet and stillness will save him. He has broken a blood-vessel on his chest, and the doctor cannot understand how he got home from the bay without spitting blood very considerably. It appears it was the smith Birgir who carried him almost all the way, and carefully and tenderly he must have done it not to have hurt poor Nordén more.

Carlos told Beatrice what he knew of Birgir's journey after the doctor, and his making him walk so unceremoniously so many miles in the middle of the night. How they had come in by the kitchen entrance so as not to disturb the whole house, and that the doctor had found Nordén lying on his bed, all his clothes on, and quite unconscious.

'What is to be done now?' added Carlos, as he finished.

'Is Dr. Pulsander very clever?' asked Beatrice, after a few moments' thought.

'I have heard he is a very good physician. He belongs, I believe, to the new-fashioned set who give very little medicine, and let Nature do her own work,' said Carlos, gravely.

'You must speak to him, dear Carlos, and find out if he wishes to have any one else in consultation. Or perhaps it would be best to send at once to Stockholm for Professor M——, or one of the other great doctors there. But have you thought that there is another person who must be sent for?'

'Who is that?' asked Carlos, somewhat astonished.

'Mr. Nordén's mother,' she answered, quietly.

'Mrs. Nordén!—yes, of course, though I never thought of her!' exclaimed Carlos. 'Thank you, sweet sister dear; you ladies always think of everything. I will ride myself to the station at once, and telegraph to her to come, telling her how very welcome she will be. Have you her address?'

'No, but Aunt von Claaken has. Don't forget to have your breakfast first before you go,' called

out Beatrice after him as he left the room. And well it was she reminded him of this; had she not, Carlos would have forgotten about it entirely.

As soon as Carlos left her, a wonderful change passed over Beatrice's face. She had controlled her feelings so well that her brother noticed nothing unusual about her, but that she was pale and very grave. This he thought arose from the fright of the day before, and also from the sad news she had just been told of Nordén's danger and suffering. It was very natural she should feel distressed at what had happened, as she had been the real cause of this terrible disaster; but to spare his sister he had given no hint to her of this. It was not without a strong effort that she had prevented herself from telling all to Carlos, and thereby obtaining a little loving support in the burden which was so very heavy for her to bear alone. When Carlos said so sadly, 'Poor Norden!' the words seemed to rend her heart in twain. She knew not why, but it was insupportable to her to hear such a compassionate expression towards him who was so strong and proud and powerful, and whose youthful vigour she had so delighted in, and felt as if she had a

kind of right to. And now she pictured him to herself pale and wounded, and with hardly strength enough to whisper a word, as Carlos had told her.

Her face grew hard and expressionless. The tears, as usual with her, refused to come to her relief, and her agitation was so violent she trembled from head to foot. She leaned her head on her hands and groaned in her agony. Then rocking herself slowly to and fro she murmured—

'Poor fellow! Call him poor fellow! I can't bear it! My darling!—I may call him so now he is ill, perhaps dying! I did not dare do it before when he stood looking at me that day, so full of life, and beauty, and health. Oh! I didn't know—not half know, then—what joy it was to me each time I saw him. And now? Why may I call him my darling?'

She was silent a little, and then continued, bitterly, 'Why?—because he is dying, and lost to me for ever.'

'What I wished was, that our love might be crushed, blotted out . . . and now it is being done, but not as I wished—not as I in my pride had meant it to be. Oh, God! My punishment

is too great. I can't bear it. I can't—though perhaps I deserve it. But he—he—must he be punished also? And not only he, but his mother too! How shall I ever dare meet her? If he dies, she will curse me; and ask me why I—I—have bereaved her of her son—her only, only son! Oh, God! It's too hard for me to bear!' And she trembled all over, bowing her head in her misery, and wishing, poor child, she could have some one to comfort and sympathise with her.

'But what shall I say to his mother?' she went on. 'Can I tell her I could not help his loving me, or injuring himself for my sake? Ah, no! no! *He* never would be glad; he, the poor low-born tutor, to win me, the rich, high, noble damsel, at such a price. I loved him! I loved him! but I was ashamed of my love, because he was not my equal! But now he is near the grave; and I see him, myself, all things, in a light as it were from the other world; I understand now what I never did before.'

After a little while she grew calmer. Her sorrow was deep, but not without its joy. She knew he was ill—very ill—most likely dying; and for this very reason she might love him; love

him with her whole heart, and think of him as her's—her's for ever.

'I *was* ashamed of my love,' she said to herself, 'but I am not so any longer. He is so good, so noble, I could give my heart to no one worthier. I have always known he was better than I. He could not do a mean thing—no, not one! He is noble in his heart. But, ah! how selfish of me to think so much of my own feelings when he is so ill—so suffering! But to know that every obstacle is thrown aside, and that I may love him, is so beautiful, so very delicious!'

And she rose up and walked about her room, dreaming soft, tender dreams, which made her feel almost happy.

And long before Carlos came back from the telegraph-office she had made up her mind what she would do, and how she would act, which ever way the present sorrowful circumstances turned; and when she had once determined on a certain line of action she always carried it out, cost what it might.

CHAPTER XIX.

CARLOS' RIDE TO THE RAILWAY STATION.

WHEN Carlos left his sister Beatrice, he ordered Prospero to be saddled and then turned his steps to the breakfast-room. Here he found Dr. Pulsander refreshing himself with substantially good things after his long country walk and watching by Nordén's bedside.

Carlos began to apologise for Birgir's kind-hearted but hasty proceeding during the night; but the doctor interrupted him by saying he was not in the least angry any longer with the smith for what he had done.

'The fellow did it from a kind motive,' said the doctor, smiling, 'although his manner was rough; and, as I have already had the honour of telling you, count, it was highly necessary for our patient to be attended to at once. Had he been left till this morning, no power on earth could have saved him.'

'Do you think now he will live?' asked Carlos, eagerly.

'It's very difficult to say; but from what I have already seen I should judge he has a very strong constitution, and then he is very young—both together are greatly in his favour. One thing is more important just now than all else, and that is quiet—undisturbed from the slightest thing, look, or word that will cause him to think. Can you tell me what sort of a disposition he has? Is he passionate or hasty at all?'

'Judging from what I have seen of him,' answered Carlos, 'I should say he was one of the calmest fellows I know; but I have not much talent for studying character. Here comes my betrothed, Fröken Lilienrooth, I will ask her,' and he introduced the doctor to Signe, who just entered the room. 'Signe, dear, Dr. Pulsander wants to know what kind of character Mr. Nordén has, as everything depends upon keeping him quiet. Can you tell us what you think or know about him?'

Carlos spoke very gravely, not in his usual bantering way. After a moment Signe answered,

'I always believed he was a very phlegmatic

quiet person till Elfva told me he was most passionate.'

'Elfva!' exclaimed Carlos, opening his eyes in astonishment; 'how on earth does she know anything about Nordén?'

'Elfva and Mr. Nordén are very good friends, and he has told her a great many things he talks to no one else about. One day I said to her I thought Mr. Nordén had a very pleasant, agreeable temper, and she answered me, "But, Signe, he accepted the position of tutor because he was so passionate and tyrannical at home, and his mother thinks he never can do wrong, and is pleased with all he does." Elfva, it appears, would not believe him at first, and then Mr. Nordén told her of a few little episodes in his life, which proved what he said was true.'

'That's the strangest thing I have heard for a long time,' remarked Carlos, as he went on eating. 'But now I do remember what a fury he was in that night we had the fight with the broom-stealers. He seemed like another being, so changed was he from his ordinary easy manner. I don't understand him at all; he is generally so very apathetic.'

'Oh, yes; just so,' said the doctor, as he helped himself to a good portion of omelette aux fines herbes. 'Those usually sleepy characters are terrible when once roused up, and show a wildness of temper that makes one shudder. We must be very careful of him—indeed we must.'

Carlos now communicated to the doctor the reason of his ride to the station, and asked him if the mother's presence would excite his patient?

'That depends upon his mother herself,' answered the doctor, as he wiped his mouth, 'and how she behaves on their first meeting. We must warn her to be very quiet and careful.'

'I do not think there is any need to warn her of that,' said Signe; and then she hesitated, as she saw Carlos look astonished at her.

'Why, Signe! Has Elfva related to you stories of the good mamma as well as the son?'

But she was spared answering by the entrance of Fröken von Claaken. The old lady went straight over to the doctor, sat down by him, and asked him how his patient was. Dr. Pulsander told her he could hardly say. He was going now to drive back to the town to see his patients there, and in a few hours he would return, and

then, if necessary, stay all night; and later on in the day he should be able, perhaps, to give a more decided opinion as to the result of the young fellow's injury.

Fröken von Claaken wanted to know what she should do for Nordén during these few hours. Her plan was always to try one remedy after another till a favourable result followed. She now suggested one thing after another which in her experience had always been efficacious; besides, there could be no harm in trying. She did not like leaving Nature to work her own cure. She was not at all satisfied that simple rest and perfect quiet was all that he needed just now. As was usual with her when excited she talked on and on; and as the doctor did not answer, she concluded he was also convinced, and went on to prove how a certain potion of her own had cured numbers of people suffering from the same illness as Nordén's.

The young people sat round the table enjoying the fun of watching the two. The doctor was silent, with his eye-glasses on, looking across the room, with a slight smile playing about his mouth, which showed how amused he was at the advice

he was compelled to listen to. Carlos had finished his breakfast, and wanted to be off, but could not resist the temptation of staying to hear the end of the dispute.

The longer Fröken spoke, the more she became certain that the doctor would in the end come round to her opinion; whilst he, on his side, was wondering how he could deter her from in any way interfering with his patient for the next few hours.

At last Fröken said, determinedly,

'It's the best thing he can have, and I shall give him a dose of my potion as soon as I go upstairs.

'Potion! *Did* you say *potion*?' exclaimed the doctor, in a voice that terrified the little lady.

'Yes,' stammered she; 'made from buttercups. Is it bad?'

'Bad! Your potion!' The doctor rose hastily from his seat, and appeared as if he were going into a passion against the potion; but remembering he had to take a journey, he looked out of window, seized his hat and stick, and, with a grave shake of his head, said,

'Remember, Madam, no potion!—not on any

condition. Give him only what I told you ;' and with a stately bow he left the room.

He was followed by Carlos, who could hardly keep his countenance at the dejected expression on Fröken von Claaken's face.

The old lady sat still for a moment or two in apparently deep thought. Then she rose, and said, more to herself than the others—

'It's a good thing I didn't give it him of my own accord. I must be more careful in future. But it's well in any case to know my physic is so *very* strong. I was not aware of it.'

The little open trap stood waiting to carry Dr. Pulsander to the town. He looked at it with a well-pleased air, as he thought how much pleasanter and shorter the road would be to him now he was to be driven by a pair of fine horses, and with a cigar in his mouth, than it was in the night when he had to walk. Just then Birgir came up. The doctor nodded to him, and the smith came slowly forward, hat in hand. He would much rather not have been seen by the doctor, who would of course remember his rough treatment of the last night. He was simply hanging about in the hope of hearing how Mr. Nordén was; and

when the doctor called him, his face grew rough and stubborn, and showed he did not expect any very kind words.

'It must be you who fetched me last night,' said the doctor.

'Yes, it was,' answered the smith, thumbing his cap, and looking down on the ground.

The doctor stared at him for a moment, and then said in a low voice to Carlos,

'It was well I didn't object. That giant there could have done for me as easily as he would have cracked a nut.' Then, turning to the smith, he asked, 'Where did you learn that manner of fetching doctors? Do you think doctors are to be dragged across country in the same way as you would drag a bit of timber?'

The smith did not answer.

'I will make him open his mouth,' thought the doctor; and, with a sudden change in his voice, he asked Birgir if he had heard how the tutor was this morning? Birgir's face altered in an instant, and his great brown eyes, which before had been so gloomy and cold, now lighted up with eager interest. This reference to Nordén had, so to speak, banished all his ill-temper and

obstinacy. If the doctor had spoken angrily to him, and the Count had ordered him to beg pardon, and then leave his service, he would most likely always have believed he had acted properly to the doctor, and have grown hard and bad again. But the few kind words had softened him. He fidgeted with his cap a little, and then said,

'I was very rough and stupid, I can well believe, and I beg the doctor to excuse me; but I didn't know how else to manage. The young gentleman would not let me speak to the family, and tell how ill he was; but I saw he was bad as I brought him from the bay, although he got a little better when he was on his bed; and so—then——.'

'So then,' interrupted the doctor, 'then you determined to fetch me without a carriage? Well, I must say you did your work well. But we won't talk of that any more. Now you would like to hear, I know, how your young gentleman is? Well, at least I am not quite without hope; and if nothing fresh happens, we may, with God's help, bring him round. More I can't say now. Farewell for the present; we shall meet again soon.'

The doctor began to fancy he had taken a liking for Birgir. He turned to the Count, and wished him good morning.

'I will be back again in a few hours; and, if you will allow me, I will keep the carriage till I return. About the consultation with some other physician—I hardly think it necessary. The danger is great, but the case is a very clear one. When Mrs. Nordén comes, she may wish for another opinion, and then you can have it if you like. I am quite willing.' And Dr. Pulsander stepped into the carriage and drove off.

Carlos sprang on Prospero, and took the opposite direction to the doctor. He had to ride fourteen good miles before he could reach a telegraph-station. Prospero had no reason to quarrel with the road, which was remarkably level and smooth till about three or four miles before reaching the station. Here the ground began to rise visibly, and the road lay through a kind of hollow formed by some huge rocks on either side. Just as he entered this defile, he saw before him a large cart-load of hay, drawn by a pair of oxen. Partly to rest Prospero a little, and partly because the way was so narrow it would have been rather difficult

to pass the hay-cart, Carlos walked his horse, and let the reins hang loosely on his neck. The oxen went so slowly, Carlos soon found himself close behind the cart—so close that Prospero tried to reach a bit of the hay. The noise of the voices of the two men driving the cart was very distinct.

A lively conversation appeared to be going on between the two men, who, as they sat just behind the oxen, could not see Carlos, and talked in that loud way peasants often do when they find themselves sitting near each other. So Carlos became an unwilling listener to the peasants' conversation.

'Well, how is it then now?' continued one of them. 'It must 'a been a pretty good tough job to knock up such a strong fellow as he is. He looked to me able to stand anything.'

'Stand anything! well, so he did,' answered the other. 'But to stand what he did one must have a chest like a steam engine! From what I've heard tell on, he ran from the sea to Hafnäs Castle and back in ten minutes, and that's more than three miles.'

Just here Carlos tried to pass the cart, as he fancied the road was a little wider, but a bit of overhanging rock prevented him, and he was

obliged to keep his place behind the hay. It was very plain to him who they were talking about, but presently a word he caught made him listen more attentively than before.

'But what was wanted in such a hurry?' asked one, who evidently was a friend of the driver, and a stranger to the immediate neighbourhood of Hafnäs. 'Who bade him run in that way, like a madman?'

'That's the astonishing part of it,' answered the other. 'They say it was Fröken Beatrice, the Count's sister, wanted something from the Castle; some say she was wet—but one person told me she only wanted a pin to fasten up her dress.'

'A pin!' exclaimed the other, and one could hear in his voice he thought his friend was joking; 'are you mad? you won't make me believe any fellow would tear along like that to fetch a pin for a girl, let her be who she may.'

'I don't know about that! I have heard of fellows doing stupid things when'—and here he paused an instant as if to gain his listener's attention—'when love's whims fly in them, poor fellows!'

'Ah, ah!' whistled the other, 'now I understand.'

'I am not quite sure that was the reason; any how, it looks like it, don't it?' added the driver. 'There's one as told me, that his sweetheart told him, and she be servant up there at the Castle, that the young fellow's smitten with Fröken Beatrice—and no wonder, for she be wonderful beautiful. But she told her sweetheart not to say nothing about it, on no account.'

'But just tell me,' asked the friend, 'did she say anything if the young lady also is sweet' . . .

'Are you stupid? why he is only the' . . .

But at this moment the cart reached the open road, and Carlos dashed past it without casting one glance on the two men, who had taken off their caps instinctively as soon as they saw a gentleman near them. He was so occupied with what he had just heard, that he rode on at full speed, and only slackened rein when he found himself at the station.

'Why, that's the Count himself,' said the driver, when he recovered from the astonishment of Carlos' gallop past his cart. I wonder if he heard us?'

'How could he, when we spoke so low, and sat so near each other? No, no, he could not.'

CHAPTER XX.

ELFVA'S ROOM.

SLOWLY the hours rolled by that day at Hafnäs. Every one was sad and grieved at what had happened, and each would have helped in any way possible, but there was little to do, and that little Fröken von Claaken did herself.

She was in her right place in a sick room. One would hardly imagine such a lively, hasty little body as she could be so gentle and attentive as a nurse. But so it was. Her only failing was a wish to try all her own remedies: but as in this case the doctor had peremptorily forbidden the potion to be administered, or anything else but what he had ordered, there was nothing to say against her, and she was simply the best person to take care of an invalid.

She was unwearied in her watching, and yet every one of her usual duties was performed without any neglect. Puff, puff, puff—was heard all

day up and down the stairs, till one could almost imagine a small steam engine had been stationed on the landing.

Each time the old lady went into Nordén's room she held in her breath, in order that no noise should disturb him. She would go and look at him, put things in order, and then when the effort to still the hard breathing was unavailing, she would retire from the room as quietly as possible, being almost choked with the cough which was produced by her struggle against her short breath.

Signe had been in Elfva's room all the morning. She had tried to be busy with her usual occupations, but she could do nothing this day. Her work worried her, and reading aloud to her sister seemed to weary them both. From time to time Fröken von Claaken peeped in and told them how Mr. Nordén was going on.

Elfva lay on her couch in front of the window, so as to be able to see out over the glistening lake. But the little invalid was not thinking of the view before her: her face had an expression of pain and anxiety which was not usual. The beautiful features were generally so very calm and happy in

their outward appearance, although her long illness had made them thin and grave beyond her years. Signe sat on a stool near her, on her knee was a book, in which she had been trying to read, but the tale had no interest for either, and they were both wrapped in their own sad thoughts.

Signe broke a long silence, saying in a half-hushed voice, 'I wonder . . . '

Elfva turned her head, and for a moment she looked in her sister's face, and then said:

'When she can be here?'

'Yes. I feel to long so very much for her to come; I fancy everything will be better when she is here, and he has his mother by his bedside.'

'If she does not live far from a station, Henrik says she can be here to-morrow evening,' said Elfva.

There was silence again for awhile; then Signe said: 'Do you know, Elfva dear, that Aunty von Claaken thought she heard him ask for his mother several times? He said once, "Mamma!" just as if she were in the room, and when he had no answer, he said softly, "Anna, dear, why don't you hear when your Nils calls?" Who can that be? He has no sister.'

Elfva was silent for a moment ere she answered:

'He must mean his mother when he says Mamma or Anna, dear. I don't know what his mother's Christian name is, but I know he always says "thou"[1] to her. She was so young when he was born that they are more like sister and brother than mother and son; and he told me once he had never longed for a sister, because his mother had been everything to him.'

'Ah! I should like to hear a little more about her,' exclaimed Signe. 'Sweet sister, do tell me all you know of her.'

'I should have told you about her long ago, dear Signe, but I had an idea I ought not,' Elfva answered, smiling. 'But now she is coming here, and we shall see her, it cannot matter. Mr. Nils never said to me he did not wish me to repeat what he said, but—I can hardly explain—but I thought he would not like it, perhaps, if I did.'

It was strange to hear a child of fifteen speak in this manner. Although Signe was the eldest she felt, as did all the household, that suffering had been Elfva's teacher in many things, especially

[1] In Sweden children always speak to their parents in the third person, and use the words 'mamma' and 'papa' in the place of every pronoun—as for example, 'Did mamma enjoy her walk?' instead of 'Did you enjoy your walk?'

in the art of seeing into another's thoughts, and sympathising with them without wounding their feelings.

But Signe did not seem quite to understand this. She often wondered why it was that every one went to Elfva with their troubles and sorrows, and always found comfort. As she sat one day in her room, she asked her.

'Tell me, darling Elfva,' she said, throwing her arms around her, 'tell me what you do, or what I shall do, that all may come to me—I don't know how to say it—but that all may come to me, as they do to you.'

Elfva knew what she meant. She drew her sister's head close to hers and kissed her cheek.

'Signe, sweet one, can't you guess?'

'Yes, they love you best,' answered Signe, as the tears rolled over her cheeks.

'If you say that again, naughty sister, you shall be answered nothing,' whispered Elfva, as she curled one of Signe's tresses round her finger. 'Like me best! How could that be? I know one whom you can't accuse of that! Guess again!'

"No, tell me!' begged Signe.

'Because I am ill,' she said gently, as an expression of suffering passed over her face. 'I believe that is why—at least, I know of no other. It's just as if they knew they did me good when they let me share their sorrows and joys. Their sorrows make me forget my own, and their joys are mine whenever I hear of them.'

But this little scene had passed between the sisters long ago before Signe was betrothed.

'I don't think I know much about Mrs. Nordén,' continued Elfva; 'Mr. Nils used often to come up and talk to me about Gustaf, and how he managed him, and what they did, and so on; and then sometimes he spoke of his mother, and about himself as a child.'

'Well, tell me something, sweet Elfva,' entreated Signe.

'She was married at sixteen, and her husband died soon after, and she has always been her son's only friend all his life, and he is now twenty-two.'

'Why did he leave her?' asked Signe.

'That's something I never quite understood,' answered Elfva. 'It seems to me as if somehow he thought he was too peremptory and exacting at home, and that, as his mother never corrected

him, he determined to go away and learn to subdue his passionate nature. It must have been a hard trial to both to part, but he thought it best, and did it.'

'I don't fancy they were poor,' said Signe. 'Do you know what his father was? I always have imagined he was a pastor.'

'He never said a word to me as to their being poor or rich,' answered Elfva; 'but he does not give me the impression of having been brought up in poverty. He does not remember his father, who died when he was a baby. How was it you fancied his father was a pastor? I never thought that, Signe dear.'

At this moment Henrik came in. He had just come from the sick room, and told them that Nordén was still lying in a half-unconscious state, but that the doctor, who had returned from the town, was satisfied he was no worse—which in itself was a good sign. Dr. Pulsander was going to stay and sleep in the next room to Nordén's, that he might be near at hand during the night.

Henrik asked where Beatrice was.

'Signe went to her room a few hours ago,' answered Elfva, 'but did not see her, as Annette

said she was tired after yesterday's fright, and had such a bad headache, she wished to be quiet and alone. Has Carlos come back yet, Henrik?'

'He must have waited at the station for an answer to his telegram, to bring it home with him, or else he would have been back by now, as he rides so fast,' answered Henrik. 'It's just half-past four: he will be here soon.'

CHAPTER XXI.

CARLOS AND BEATRICE.

AN hour after Carlos came back. He had, as Henrik supposed, brought the answer with him.

'She comes to-morrow by the train,' said he to Henrik, who met him on the steps. He went straight up to the invalid's room, spoke a few words to the doctor and Fröken von Claaken, and then went down again and along the corridor to his sister's apartments. He found Beatrice almost in the same position as he had left her in the early morning. She had changed her dressing-gown for the grey mourning dress she still wore for her father, and appeared a little brighter as she asked eagerly:

'You waited for an answer? Well?'

'I had the answer tolerably quick. She comes to-morrow by the day train.'

He unfolded the telegram, and held it before her, as if there was something there he wished

her to see. But Beatrice appeared lost in thought as soon as she had had an answer to her question. She had made up her mind to tell Carlos everything, and she was now wondering how she should begin. She did not look at the telegram, and when her brother noticed how absent she was, he altered his mind, and folded the paper up again.

'Sister dear,' he said, 'we must be very kind and friendly to her now she is coming, and make her feel at home.'

He said this to give Beatrice a hint that she, as the real lady of the Castle, must exert herself to welcome her guest more warmly than she usually did.

Beatrice looked up questioningly.

'Yes, I understand,' she said slowly, 'what you mean. You wish me to be very friendly to her. I promise to do all I can.'

'Hm!' thought Carlos; 'this does not seem to be the exact time to scold her for allowing the tutor to pay her attention without telling me of it: she must have done it, as the peasants talked of it. But how—*comment le diable* shall I begin?' . . .

He walked over to the window to try and find out how he could introduce the subject—what it would be best to say.

But as he stood he felt a soft pair of arms put round his neck, and a voice so low and hushed he could hardly hear it, say—

'You beg me to be friendly to her. But how will she be towards me?'

He wanted to turn and look in her face, for her question astonished him. But she kept behind him, and he instinctively felt she wished her face not to be seen, so still looking out of window he answered:

'Why should she not be friendly disposed towards you, my darling little sister?'

'Because I may be the cause of her losing her only son. Won't she hate me?'

'Beatrice! what nonsense you talk! if he overstrained himself for your sake it was only out of amiability, or whatever you call it. He would have done the same for any other lady.'

She reflected a moment ere answering, and then said slowly with much emphasis—

'No, Carlos, he would not.'

'What do you say? How do you know?' asked Carlos.

'Because he is fond of me—because he *loves* me.'

'Beatrice! I ask you once more, how do you know that? Has he told you so?' asked Carlos hurriedly.

She did not answer at once. Nordén had certainly sung his affection for her that never-to-be-forgotten night on the lake; but he had certainly *said* nothing. She coloured deeply as she answered—

'He told me he loved me in his song that night he sang under my window. No, Carlos, don't, don't laugh . . . '

'Darling Beatrice, are you sure that was not an ordinary serenade—words written for any lady, and sung, perhaps, fifty times before?'

'No! no! Carlos, how can you talk so! I *know* he loves me—a thousand things have told me so, things you would as little understand as you do how delightful—ah! ten million times more delightful it was to be told in song how he loved me, than if it had been in cold words and

ordinary phrases! Ah, yes! he loves me! and you can't think . . . '

Carlos turned suddenly round and looked wonderingly at his sister. Singularly enough, he had not perceived what the low tone of her voice could not hide any more than her words, but now a light dawned upon him. 'Beatrice! what! you don't mean . . . you return Mr. Nordén's affection?'

'Yes, Carlos;' and she smiled and blushed as she spoke. 'I believe I mean that. But I have not told him so . . . yet. I never meant him to know it, but I don't know what has come over me . . . I am quite another being to what I was, and now I believe that . . .'

'That you will tell him what you feel?' asked Carlos.

'No! no! you know I did not mean that. But, Carlos, dear Carlos, don't be angry with me, or laugh at me. If you only knew how I struggled against it, and how I suffered before he was ill, when I did not allow myself to think of him; but now . . . since his life is in danger, I feel that he is the only one I could ever love, and that if he dies, all my happiness dies with him.'

'And you have decided that, if he lives, as I hope he will, you, you . . .' Carlos hesitated.

'Will share life with him? Yes,' she answered.

Carlos paced the room.

'Have you thought, or perhaps I should say, decided? Separation from your friends; change in your habits, and, and . . .'

'Yes, I have decided. His wife will I be, if he asks me, his, and no one else's. Say not a word against it,' she added more courageously, as she saw Carlos striving hard not to smile, as he was going to speak again. 'Say not a word more, it's of no use. As Mrs. Nordén I will live, as Mrs. Nordén will I die. There is no other name on earth I will so willingly be called, as Nordén. Do you hear, Carlos?' said she eagerly, as she threw her arms round his neck once more. 'Do you hear what I say, Carlos?'

'Yes, I hear,' answered Carlos, somewhat shortly, but with an expression round his mouth which showed something amused him. 'Yes, I hear; but I am sorry to say, that such a wish shall never be gratified. Never shall my sister Beatrice Falkenheim bear the name of Nordén, and that's as true as I sit here.'

'What do you mean, Carlos?' said she. 'Say, what do you mean? Who can prevent me, if he lives, and wishes it?'

'He shall never wish it, if he lives a thousand years; and if he does, then I shall—I shall forbid it!'

'You, you, Carlos!'

'Yes, *I*.'

'By what right?'

'By the right I have over you as your guardian.'

'But I will appeal, appeal to all the tribunals in the country. I will appeal to the king.'

'But you will lose.'

'What!' exclaimed she, and her eyes flashed fire, 'shall any power on earth prevent my giving my hand to the man I love, and who loves me in return?'

'That's another matter entirely,' answered her brother. 'Marry Gustaf's tutor, you can if you choose. But call yourself Nordén, I won't allow.'

He looked at his sister, who appeared not to know what to say or what to understand. Then

taking out the telegram, he said gravely, but with an odd tone of voice—

'Perhaps this paper will explain what I mean. I have only intended giving my independent sister a little lesson to punish her for her behaviour. When one *has* a brother to turn to to help one . . . Now I am going to dress for dinner, which must be nearly ready.'

He kissed her and went. . . .

She opened the telegram, and read:

'The Countess Nordenstjerna thanks Count Falkenheim for his friendly invitation, and will arrive to-morrow by the day-train.'

Beatrice's first feeling, when she recovered from her astonishment at the contents of the telegram, was one of intense thankfulness that she had determined to give her hand to the one she loved, and had told Carlos so before she had the slightest idea of the high rank and riches Mr. Nordén was now known to possess.

Neither she herself, nor her brother, could for one moment suspect that the alteration in Nordén's name had caused her to change in her feelings towards the tutor. Then she thought, 'But if *he* should believe that it made a difference! Yes, to

be true to myself, it would have made a difference, a great difference once. Beatrice Falkenheim, as she was, would have said "yes" to Count Nordenstjerna, but would have considered it a duty owing to herself and her family never to own her weakness for the simple tutor. But Beatrice Falkenheim, as she is now, is proud of being loved by the man she learned to know as simple Nils Nordén. Who he is, and what he is called, is all the same to her. He is noble of heart and good, and on this ground he belongs to the nobility of true worth and greatness.

'And some day,' said she, as she raised her eyes, filled with tears, to heaven, 'some day, please God, I will tell him how it was, and he will understand me, I believe and trust.'

She called Annette, and dressed in a very happy humour. And as she went down to dinner, feeling brighter than she had done for many a long day, she met Carlos, who said kindly to her,

'Beatrice, dear, I think it will be best not to tell the secret just now. It will be time enough when the Countess comes; or, at least, we need not say anything about it before to-morrow, and then they can talk over their astonishment at

Nordén's rank and titles, whilst we are away fetching the Countess from the station. You will go with me, of course, won't you?'

'Yes,' she answered simply; and they went in to dinner.

CHAPTER XXII.

DOCTOR BOGARIUS.

Doctor Bogarius always spent the whole morning in his study, amongst his beloved books and papers, so that no one had thought it necessary to inform him of what had happened during the night. This morning, too, he had sent down an excuse for not appearing at breakfast, and begged to have his sent upstairs to him. When he came to dinner he had not the slightest idea Nordén was ill, and that Doctor Pulsander occupied Nordén's place at his left hand.

Doctor Bogarius had a tremendous appetite. He always consumed the first two courses without paying any attention to what was going on around him. But after the keen edge of his appetite was satisfied, he generally considered a little conversation would give a relish to the coming dishes. He was so accustomed to have Nordén at his side,

that he never thought it necessary to turn his head and see if he sat there or not.

'I have been thinking over what we spoke about yesterday,' he observed; 'and I am quite convinced that the opinion I held then is right.'

No answer followed. Doctor Bogarius waited a moment, and then did as he had often done to Nordén, gave his neighbour a push with his elbow to attract his attention.

Doctor Pulsander heard the remark, and felt the nudge; but he naturally thought the words were addressed to some one else, as he had not had the pleasure of meeting his neighbour before, and the nudge he supposed was an accident. He therefore moved his chair a little farther off, and went on talking to Fröken von Claaken.

When Doctor Bogarius got no answer, he repeated again what he had said before, as he concluded Nordén had not heard him—and this time much louder; and as he still got no answer, he gave a second nudge with his elbow, much more decided than the former one. Doctor Pulsander was just lifting a glass of wine to his lips when he received this second nudge on his right arm. It

was only just mere chance which kept the wine from being spilled over the table. Had it been a mischievous boy sitting next to him, he could have understood such behaviour; but that a big old man, with grey hair put behind his ears, and a huge forehead, busy eating beef-steak, should indulge in such pastime was more than he could quite allow. He looked at him questioningly, and murmured to himself, 'You are a strange animal!' But Bogarius still went on,

'You said that the word *pulpitum* came from a Latin root, and you would not agree to my opinion that it is derived from a Greek word, although you said it might come from a word like it in sound. Now what derivation is it from —tell me that?'

'Pulsatilla!' answered Doctor Pulsander, determined to try and wake up the doctor; 'Pulsatilla vulgaris.'

'Bah!' exclaimed he, in a tone of contempt, and, as usual, not turning round to see who spoke; 'What do you mean? The question is, how the word *pulpitum*, from which comes the Swedish word *pulpet* (desk), has anything to do

with *palpo*, which I told you it had not, and was perfectly impossible.'

'The devil may listen to your lecture,' thought Doctor Pulsander, 'only let me drink a glass of wine in peace;' and he moved his chair as far away from the reach of the elbow as he could.

Presently Doctor Bogarius turned round, and literally stared at his neighbour from over his spectacles. Each glance was a lecture. But what was his astonishment when he saw a strange person sitting in Nordén's place—a little, fat, bald man, with spectacles on his nose! He looked at him, and tried in vain to understand who this stranger could possibly be.

At this moment a servant handed him a dish of stewed fowls and rice. Doctor Bogarius mechanically took hold of the spoon, and full of rice as it was, he pointed it towards Doctor Pulsander, and said in a voice which he meant for a whisper, but was heard all round the table clearly and distinctly,

'Who is that gentleman?'

The servant was in an awkward fix; but he did the best he could under the circumstances. He left the spoon in the hand of Bogarius, and going

round to his right ear he whispered the doctor's name.

'Doctor Pulsander?' repeated Bogarius, in the same high voice. 'What is he doing here?'

Doctor Pulsander had, in the meantime, received a few hints of the peculiarities of Doctor Bogarius; and quickly understanding the state of the case, he interposed—

'I will myself have the honour of informing you, sir, if you will only be quick and help yourself to fowl before it gets cold, and let the dish pass on to the next. I am here to cure the young fellow, Mr. Nordén, who overstrained himself, and ruptured a blood vessel, and must be kept very still.'

And then he related to Doctor Bogarius all the details, as far as he knew them. The worthy doctor listened most attentively and interestedly; and when he had heard all, he went on with his dinner, and did not say a word more.

This little incident succeeded for a time in enlivening the party round the table; but they soon relapsed into an unusual silence, broken once by Fröken von Claaken trying to persuade Doctor Pulsander to give her his reasons for objecting so

decidedly to her favourite remedy—the butter-cup potion. The dinner soon came to an end, for no one cared to linger when there was so much sorrow and illness in the house.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TUTOR'S MOTHER.

THE next day, at five o'clock in the afternoon, Beatrice was punctually ready.

As the carriage drove up to the entrance, Carlos, who was standing by his sister's side, waiting on the step, called out,

'What does this mean? I told you to bring the large coach round.'

'Yes,' answered the coachman, touching his hat; 'but I had orders, after the Count was in the stables, to take this little carriage to go to the station.'

'Who gave that order?'

'Countess Beatrice's maid, Annette, told me to do it, as her mistress had said so,' answered the man.

Carlos said nothing more; but he bit his lip, as he handed Beatrice to her seat. He would not ask

her why she had so acted before the servants. The carriage rolled off.

Carlo was still silent. He would not utter an angry word to his sister, so waited till his displeasure was over. When children, he and Beatrice had often had decided quarrels, and he had been very often very passionate in his dealings with her: but since his father's death he had never allowed himself to say a single word to her, however angry he might be, if she vexed him, till he was quite calm, and had full command over himself again.

The one special point on which he brooked no interference was his management of the stables. His wish was law there, and had been even in his father's time. Nothing was done there without his personal permission—not even the riding of a horse or the use of a carriage; and now he had ordered a certain carriage to be used this afternoon for himself to drive in, and another was brought to him instead! It was really too impertinent! He sat in his corner thinking what *could* be Beatrice's motive for choosing this little cramped Wienska carriage, instead of the large, roomy barouche he had ordered. His anger had

all vanished; but he could not imagine why she had done such an odd thing.

Beatrice left him alone for a short time; then, putting her face close to his, she said, softly,

'Are you very angry with your little sister for what she has done?'

There was a moment's pause ere he answered:

'I was very vexed with you for about three minutes and a half—that I confess; but now I am only astonished at your choice, and trying to understand what idea it is you have running through your little brain.'

'I had two reasons; but I shall only tell you one of them, dear Carlos.'

'Well, tell me the first, and then I will judge for myself if you must confess the second,' said Carlos, smiling.

'I remembered what you told me, that we must receive Countess Nordénstjerna with all due honour, so naturally we must take the best carriage to meet her. I told Annette to go and see which one you had ordered, and to say I wished for the Wienska carriage. And then I did not see you to tell you of the change till just now when we met at the door.'

Carlos did not answer at once.

'I must have your other reason,' said he. 'Didn't you remember that in this one there is only room for two? Did you think I should sit up on the coach-box, returning?'

'Yes, I thought you would,' answered Beatrice.

'Well, really! that was very considerate of you.'

'Listen, Carlos dear, since you oblige me to say my other reason,' observed Beatrice very unwillingly. 'I had counted upon you to drive home, for you drive better and quicker than Jonson in the dark. Think how anxious the Countess will be to reach Hafnäs.'

'Hm!' said Carlos. 'Was that all?'

'Not quite, but—'

'But you would rather not tell the rest?'

'Yes.'

'Well, you need not. Perhaps I can guess what it is.'

He had certainly divined why it was she wished for the little carriage. She felt an inexpressible longing to see and talk with Nils Nordén's mother alone—perhaps to tell her how it was the accident had happened, and to beg to be forgiven

for being its cause. Beatrice felt this would be impossible with a third person in the carriage, even though that third person were her only brother.

It was the only time in all her life that Beatrice attempted any intrigue to gain her own wishes. It succeeded well, and she was glad; but she was very thankful to Carlos for not making any fuss about it and scolding her more.

A pause ensued, which Carlos broke by exclaiming: 'God be thanked, we can tell her her son is a shade better to-day. You asked Doctor Pulsander how he was, the last thing before you came, didn't you, darling?'

'Yes, but he said all danger is by no means past, though I could tell her that he was going on as well as was to be expected. Promise, dear Carlos, to drive very fast home.'

'Yes, moderately fast. It will be coal dark by that time; but you need not groan if I do drive slowly. Thanks to the telegraph and railway she will arrive wonderfully quick. Had it been in the olden time she would have taken three times as long.'

When they reached the station the train had

not yet come in, but five minutes after it arrived. Beatrice stood by Carlos on the platform, and both of them peered eagerly into each carriage as it slowly rolled on past them. The lamps were all lit in the compartments, so that they could see the different faces quite easily.

'Do you see anyone you think is she?' asked Carlos.

Instead of answering, Beatrice asked another question: 'Do you think she will come alone?'

'Alone? yes, I suppose so. She will bring her maid, of course; but her husband is dead, and Nils is her only child. Why do you ask?'

'Because in the last carriage but one sits a lady who seems to me to be the only one who can be the Countess, and by her side is an elderly woman who looks like a waiting woman.'

The train had stopped now, and a few passengers got out, among them the two Beatrice had noticed.

They stood still by their trunk as people do when they wait for some one to meet them. One of the two, who was evidently the serving-woman, was busy watching her box, whilst the other looked eagerly around till her eyes fell

on Beatrice and Carlos. She hastened forward, and was met by Beatrice, who almost sprang towards her; both ladies uttered the other's name at the same instant.

'Countess Nordénstjerna?'

'Fröken Falkenheim?'

And in the same breath the question asked with trembling lips and a voice veiled with emotion: 'How is Nils?'

'He is better.'

The mother drew a deep breath, and remained quite still as Beatrice continued:

'The doctor is content with his state to-day, and hopes he is doing well. Shall we go to the carriage? My brother Carlos,' she added, as he just then came forward.

The Countess offered him her hand as if she had known him a long time, as she said: 'Thank you for that long, friendly telegram;' and from that moment they were always good, firm friends.

'If the Countess will step in,' he said presently, 'I think we can drive off at once. I have already taken a great liberty, which I must beg to apologise for; but the old servant said that she had received orders to take a room here for the

night, and then return home to-morrow. It must surely be a mistake of hers? I have persuaded her to go with us. Won't you allow her to go to Hafnäs?'

'Poor old Brita!' said the Countess, smiling. 'She must have shown you, Count, how pleased she is to go to Hafnäs. I hardly thought of bringing her with me so far, but she would come. And now, if you will have us both, we shall be very, very grateful. Nils will certainly be very glad to see her. Brita is his old nurse.'

Each time she spoke her son's name the tremble came back to her lips. She went to speak to Brita a few words, and while she did so, Beatrice said:

'But Carlos—I am sorry—how shall we—'

'How shall we find room? Yes, you see now what happens when young ladies interfere in what they don't understand,' he answered, laughing. 'To punish you, you shan't know how I shall manage. It would only be fair if I made you hold old Brita on your lap all the way.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JOURNEY BACK.

CARLOS was in a very good temper, almost merry. He helped the Countess into the carriage, then his sister, and with the coachman's help mounted old Brita on the coach-box. The old woman was waiting, expecting the coachman to get up next, and was holding her petticoats so that he should not sit on them, when the young Count sprang up himself, and took the reins and whip in hand.

Had Brita known who it was sat beside her, she would have wondered at the great skill with which he in a few moments started the horses into a quick trot, which he managed to keep up the whole way home. But Brita was thinking of something else than clever driving. 'My box!' she screamed, 'my box! Stop! You have forgotten my box!'

'It's coming on after, dear Brita,' said Carlos,

as he laughed at the old woman's anxiety about her box. 'Sit still—sit still, or we shall capsize.'

She was quiet immediately, and turned round and looked at Carlos as well as she could in the darkness, as she said in a doubtful tone, 'How will it come?'

'With the coachman who was left at the station. Wait a little till we have passed this bend in the road. It's so dark,' added Carlos, 'I can hardly see the road here in the forest.'

'I don't like being parted from my box,' repeated Brita in a doleful voice.

'What does Mademoiselle say?' asked Carlos.

'I am not Mademoiselle,' said Brita shortly.

'Oh, well! Mrs. Brita then?'

'I was never married.'

'Jungfru[1] Brita? Is that right?' laughed Carlos.

'Yes, that's better. Let it be Jungfru, if you like, but I am generally called simply Brita.'

'Well, what did you say about your box?'

[1] 'Jungfru' is a title all elderly unmarried female servants have in Sweden; it literally means 'maid,' and is now used for this class of people instead of 'Miss,' 'Miss' belonging to all ladies not noble.

'I said I did not like my box not coming with us.'

'It's a pity I didn't know that before, because then you could have gone with the box, and the coachman come with me,' said Carlos kindly.

'I would like to have it here,' said Brita.

'Where? On your knee?'

'No!' she answered crossly.

'On mine, perhaps?'

She would not answer.

Carlos saw he was teasing the old servant too much, so he said no more.

Presently she said: 'Is it the Count himself who is sitting here driving?'

'Yes, it is he, dear Brita?' answered Carlos,

'Why do you drive so fast when it's so dark, Count?'

'To get back to Nils all the quicker. Are you afraid?'

'Oh, no; I am not exactly afraid,' she answered 'Can you drive well?'

Carlos burst out laughing.

'You mean, I suppose, do I ever turn th carriage over?'

'Yes.'

'It has happened to me, I won't deny; but this evening I promise not to do so, you may be sure.'

'Perhaps it's as well my box is not here after all,' said the old woman; 'they will take care of it?'

Inside the carriage the conversation had almost ceased. There was only one subject which interested both the ladies, and Beatrice had told all she herself knew of Nordén's illness and the doctor's treatment of him. Of the cause of the accident she had not yet had an opportunity of speaking, and she began to think that perhaps it would be kindest to leave the sorrow-stricken mother alone in peace.

The Countess sat upright in the carriage as if she expected to arrive at Hafnäs each moment. Beatrice, leaning back in her corner, could therefore watch the beautiful face unnoticed, the profile of which was so clearly delineated in the glimmering of the carriage lamps.

She had the same fair rippling hair as Nils, and the general likeness which is so often seen between mother and son, although every feature may be different. The Countess's face was oval, and she had regular and beautiful features; but her son's

was not so; he was not handsome. He resembled his father in feature, and yet he had his mother's expression and general contour so distinctly that no one would hesitate to acknowledge the relationship. She looked wonderfully young to be Nordén's mother, and had he had a sister one would have imagined she had come in her mother's stead.

The silence had lasted long, when Beatrice hesitatingly broke it by saying softly,

'Would the Countess be sorry to hear how the sad accident happened?'

'No; on the contrary, I shall be much obliged if you will tell me. I did not quite like to ask you,' answered the elder lady, turning her face towards Beatrice.

'You can't have heard the least bit about it; so I must begin at the beginning,' said Beatrice.

'Yes, I know something. Count Falkenheim was kind enough to send me a very long telegram telling me, as far as I understood, that Nils had rushed home very fast to fetch dry clothes for some one who had fallen in the lake, and that, as he sprang up the mountain, he had ruptured a blood-vessel. Was it so?'

'Yes, just so. Did he tell you who it was for?' asked Beatrice, with an effort.

'No, he did not,' answered the Countess.

'Do you know?' half whispered Beatrice.

She did not answer at once; then in a very low voice she replied,

'I believe I do.'

'You believe it was for me?'

'Yes,' answered the Countess simply.

There was a pause for a moment ere Beatrice said,

'Why do you think so?'

'That I cannot tell you.'

Till now Beatrice had sat leaning back in her corner, but the words had hardly passed the Countess's lips, when she started forward, and looking her in the face, she said:

'Yes, it was I who was the cause of the misfortune. Can you forgive me, or at least say that you pity me, and that you understand how I suffer, and shall suffer, till I see your son strong and well again by your side. You don't know yet how it happened, or that I had thrown myself into the water to quench the flames, else I should have been burnt up. *That* was why my clothes were wet. You won't, perhaps, believe it; but *I*

tell you, and mean it, too—had I known what would have happened, I would have stood still and let the flames burn me to ashes rather than have put them out as I did, and so bring this fearful misfortune on you and your son.'

If Nils Nordén's mother had cherished hitherto, deep down in her heart, a little feeling of displeasure at her son's choice, it all vanished as these words were uttered, never more to return.

The two women saw each other now for the first time, but sorrow and love knit them closely together, and they learnt to know each in this short hour better, and more intimately, than months of ordinary intercourse could possibly have taught them.

Beatrice finished by relating to the Countess all her behaviour to the tutor—the love-song on the lake, the scene in the drawing-room the next day, and then the resolution she had made before Carlos went to the telegraph-station, and her conversation with him on his return.

It was, perhaps, much to tell after so short an acquaintance; and, under other circumstances, it is quite possible Beatrice would have been more reserved in her confidences to her loved one's

mother; but to-day her heart was so full it flooded over, and one thing followed another, till she had at last laid bare to the Countess every thought and feeling she possessed.

The lights could now be seen from Hafnäs; and at the rate they were driving they would soon arrive. It was then Beatrice, colouring crimson, and with a voice so low it scarcely reached the ear it was meant for, said,

'And if he wishes to have me after all this, may I . . .?'

'My darling child,' answered the Countess smiling, 'I have only seen you for two hours, but there is not one in all broad Sweden whom I would so willingly have for my son's wife as thee. Shall I say more, or art thou content? But,' added she, after she had pressed a tender kiss on Beatrice's lips, 'but is this right, that you coax me to speak in this way? We know not yet if he will ever again—never mind—I know now something that will help him soon to get well. May I tell him, dear Beatrice, what you asked me just now?'

Beatrice grew a little confused. She thought a moment, and then said,

'Won't it be almost like—as if I made love to him? Will he—will he like it, or that I have said it? Tell me—help me—I don't know myself—if it will do him good, say so; but—but he might think me unwomanly. Say, oh! do say, quickly—we are just home!'

'I must see how he goes on,' answered the Countess, 'and, in the meantime I promise not to tell him. I will let you know before I do say anything to him.'

And so it was arranged; and the next moment the carriage drove up to the entrance.

At the top of the front steps at Hafnäs all the family gathered as soon as they heard the rolling of wheels. Henrik, Signe, Fröken von Claaken, Gustaf, Dr. Pulsander, and even Dr. Bogarius, were all gathered there, besides several servants, amongst whom was Birgir. The carriage now turned into the long avenue. The light from the lamps glittered suddenly on the line of large trees, either side, as they, one after the other, were brilliantly lit for one moment, to sink back into deep darkness the next.

'It seems, from the hard driving, she must have come,' said some one.

'Yes; I have never seen Jonson driving so fast before,' said Fröken von Claaken. 'He ought to be more careful in the dark. God be thanked! no harm has happened to them if they have come at that rate all the way.'

'It's not Jonson driving,' exclaimed Gustaf, in eager earnestness, as though this was the principal thought in every one's mind. 'It's the German carriage, and only holds two. Carlos sits on the coachbox, and drives himself. See! I am right.'

No one listened to the boy's words, for the carriage had now left the long avenue, and was coming round the lawn, and in a moment was before the entrance, drawing up as suddenly and quietly as if a magic wand had been held before it. The black horses were white with foam, and their steaming sides bore terrible witness that Carlos had not spared them in the drive home.

All hastened forward to receive the Countess, and to bid her welcome.

The Countess naturally longed to see her son as quickly as possible. Beatrice tried to think of some way of deferring the many introductions of all the family till some later time, but saw no chance of it, as they were all there, when Dr.

Bogarius came forward, and helped her out of her difficulty. In his simple mind he thought—'Here is a mother whose son is lying very ill upstairs. The sooner she goes to him, the better.'

The door of the carriage was opened, and the Countess sprang out as quickly as a young girl.

'Allow me the honour of showing you the way,' said the old man promptly. 'Your son is aware of your coming, and he waits impatiently for you.'

The long grey hair stuck behind the ears, the tall spare figure, whose every joint showed through his coat, the eagle nose in the middle of the kind face—Nils had described it all; so she recognised Dr. Bogarius at once. His old, overread eyes looked down at her so kindly and fatherly through his spectacles, that she looked up in his face, and, with a glance of intense relief and gratitude, she said, 'Thank you;' and the old gentleman led her away, and took her upstairs.

When they reached the long corridor, only lit by one lamp, Dr. Bogarius hesitated at which door to enter. He opened the door of the room Gustaf used to occupy, but which now had been

given up to the nurse. The Countess went in, and remained standing, thinking they had made a mistake; but not for long. From the next room, the door of which stood open, came a voice, so unlike its natural tone, that it required a mother's ear to recognise whose it was—

'Mother, is that you?'

Noiseless as a ghost she glided through the room, and up to the bed where he lay. Here, falling down on her knees by his side, she put her head on his shoulder, and threw her arms around him. Neither of them spoke a word, and her face was hid. But his white face, turned upwards, showed by its expression, far better than words, how happy he was.

Dr. Bogarius softly closed the door, and left them alone. It had naturally caused much astonishment in the family, when Carlos related to them that Nordén's right name was Count Nordenstjerna, and that he was lord of a princely fortune. But when the first amazement had passed, and they had talked it over, many of them were so overcome with the seriousness of the cause for this enlightenment—the son's danger and the mother's sorrow—that they accepted it

without any fuss, and long before the Countess's arrival they had almost become accustomed to the changed position, and had begun to consider the young Count as a friend and guest, who had met with his sad accident whilst staying with them.

But all were unanimous; and some of them remarked, as they stood on the steps waiting, that however rich and lordly their tutor had become, they could not like him better than they did when he was only simple Nils Nordén. And, more—they knew that the noble Count Nordenstjerna, lord of a hundred homesteads, would always remain the same as he was when he patiently listened to a scolding from Fröken von Claaken for not taking care of his clothes.

CHAPTER XXV.

CHAMBERLAIN SCHWARYENCRONA WRITES TWO LETTERS.

We must not forget that some time earlier in the summer Chamberlain Schwaryencrona had paid a visit to Hafnäs, for the purpose of seeing if by some means he could not determine Fröken Beatrice to accept him as her husband.

From the moment he left Hafnäs, in a rage that his plans were thwarted and his desires checked, by her brother's refusal to urge Beatrice to accept him, Carlos had not seen him.

Time had passed on; but now and then Carlos had heard that matters were beginning to grow serious, and that the Chamberlain was determined to use his power as far as he could.

Carlos had been so shocked at the tutor's illness, that for a few days he had not had time to think of his own concerns. But now his mother was with him, and the first danger was over,

Carlos was obliged to busy himself with the question of what he was to do. He went to Stockholm to confer with his lawyer, and when he returned he had made up his mind how to act.

'Beatrice,' said he to his sister, 'I am obliged to talk with you about money affairs. I know you don't like it, but I can't help it.'

'You mistake there,' she answered laughing; 'I do like it. I was just going to talk with *you* about money. While you were away I had a letter, which I will show you.'

'A letter! From whom?'

'From Chamberlain Schwaryencrona. It's a strange letter—the oddest I ever received.'

'What does he say?' asked Carlos, clenching his teeth.

'It's intended as a love letter, I believe; but it has other things in it as well. He says he loves me, and that his greatest wish on earth is to make me happy; but that, if he is not allowed to do as he likes best, he feels himself obliged to ruin both you and me, and make us both unhappy. Don't you call that strange?'

'Ah, no! Not so strange as it appears,' said Carlos.

'But I think it *very* strange,' continued Beatrice. 'He paid court to me once, and received a polite refusal; and now he threatens to drive you and me from Hafnäs if I don't immediately accept the amiable lover as my worthy husband!'

'He proposed again for you since then,' said Carlos. 'He offered to buy you, as he is doing now; but I answered him you were not to be sold. I did not tell you of it, because I thought there was no need. May I see the letter?'

She handed it to him, and then watched him as he read it. He smiled once or twice rather bitterly; once he bit his lip, and his face was not pleasant to see. Then he smiled again, as he gave her back the letter, saying,

'I really hardly know whether he is more of a fool, a usurer, or to be pitied—or the three together. Whichever he is, he has it in his power to make us sell Hafnäs, and perhaps, too, the small properties attached; but I would rather he did it than that you should receive any more such letters. Are you prepared to leave Hafnäs? You can go and live with Aunt Adelaide, dearest

He knew well with whom he was talking. She simply asked,

'Have you tried everything?'

'Yes, everything, but what would humiliate us.'

She rose up, went to him, and kissed him on the forehead.

'Do as you think best and right—don't think of me. I shall be able to help myself. But——'

'What?'

'Our guests,' she said. 'Won't it be difficult for them to remain here when the place is no longer yours?'

'It's bitter enough,' he answered. 'But even that is better than holding such a humiliating position. Perhaps, though——,' and he hesitated, 'they can wait for the auction, till our guests are gone. To pay the Chamberlain in time, Hafnäs must be given up three months after the day of the auction. Let me see, that——'

But she interrupted him with,

'Don't rack your brain with that, dear Carlos. The sooner it is over the better, as it must happen. The Countess is so taken up with her son, that it is quite possible she will know nothing about the auction; and if Brita should tell her

about it, then I shall tell her straight out why it is. Besides, afterwards, we have three months longer to stay here.'

Carlos looked at his sister in astonishment and wonder. He rose up, and putting his arms round her, he said,

'You are born to be a hero's wife, darling Beatrice!'

She coloured up scarlet.

'Till then I am quite content to be a hero's sister, and of that I am quite proud.'

They kissed each other tenderly, these two young creatures, whose future now seemed so dark; but, perhaps, never in all their lives had they loved each other so much as at this time. Each thought most of the trouble for the other, but neither would speak of it. Carlos knew well that his marriage with Signe, which had been fixed for the coming New Year, would have to be indefinitely put off; but he thought most for his sister. Would her changed position have any effect upon her lover? No; most certainly not. But he thought, for all that, she was to be pitied. She had put aside Nordén when he was unknown and poor. It would now be his turn, himself rich

and noble, to offer to her, poor and unendowed, to become his wife.

Well was it, perhaps, that Beatrice's pride had already, and for another cause, been humbled. Had that sorrow happened to her at the same time as this, it is most likely that the two together would have crushed her. In a few words Carlos explained to his sister the state and true reason for the auction, and of their father's debts to the Chamberlain. They owed him a large sum of money, and there was no means of paying it, except by the sale of Hafnäs; and Beatrice argued with him that it would be better to sell every inch of land they possessed, as well as Hafnäs, rather than remain in the power of such a bad, unprincipled man as Schwaryencrona.

It seems as if none of the family thought it possible to get any help from the rich Nils Nordenstjerna; or, if they did, they let the idea pass away as it came. Certain is it, that not one of them said a word about it. It was Carlos's express wish that the family difficulties should not be mentioned to the Countess or her son, so that their stay at Hafnäs might not appear inconvenient; and so well was this managed, that up to

the last minute their guests had not the slightest idea of what was going to happen to the estate of Hafnäs. And, as Beatrice observed, it was also just possible that the auction itself could take place without the Countess knowing anything of it; for she was so constantly with her son, she hardly noticed what went on in the other apartments of the Castle. So it was that, as time went on, the Countess, her son, and old Brita were the only three in all Hafnäs who were perfectly ignorant that in two or three weeks the Castle would be put up to auction for the highest bidder. It was announced in every paper. Speculators from all sides came to look at the place; and in the family nothing else was spoken of but the result of the coming terrible day, and what they should do when Hafnäs no longer belonged to them, and they were turned out of their forefathers' home.

If Carlos and Beatrice were determined to keep the auction a secret from their guests, Fröken von Claaken was not of their opinion.

'Why not tell the Count Nordenstjerna that Hafnäs is to be sold?' said she. 'It might happen that he would be willing to help Carlos

with that unlucky debt; and if he does not, there will be no harm in having mentioned it.'

This she said one day in Carlos' hearing; but he took it up, and commented on her words in such a severe way, that she never ventured to utter any such again.

Signe, when she heard this, gave a deep sigh. She understood quite well how impossible it was to turn to the Nordenstjernas; but, at the same time, she would have been very glad if, by some chance, he could have known how well it was in his power to help his friends at Hafnäs. She felt so certain that, if he were in health, and were informed of the trouble they were in, he would come forward to their rescue at once. But he was lying ill—so ill, that his life hung on a thread; yet he might get better before the fatal day. If he *only* might know! But Carlos' will was law with her, so she said nothing.

Three weeks of sorrow and trouble to all at Hafnäs slowly crept by. No plans for their future had been made; they only waited and longed anxiously for the auction to come, and let them know by its result if there would be anything left in the future for them.

Two days before October 5, the day fixed for the sale, Beatrice received a letter from the Chamberlain Schwarvencrona. It was as follows:—

'My gracious lady,—You have not thought it worth while, it seems, to take any notice of an epistle I gave myself the pleasure of addressing to you in the middle of last month. Perhaps you will think me presumptuous in once more taking pen in hand to send you a few lines; but I waive the chance of your possible vexation, and beg you to listen to me with patience, whilst I explain to you the reason of conduct, which was actuated by only one motive—affection for your noble self! I was once in the position of being able to help your honoured father, the late Count. It was a great pleasure to me, not only because he was a good and noble man, but because he put confidence in me, and thus ranked me among his best friends.'

(Here followed a long explanation of the money transaction, and the reasons for pressing the payment so urgently now.)

'In this trying moment, when the money must be paid, and your noble brother rescued from his

difficulty, the thought possessed me—who so able to do both as the brother-in-law of the Count and the husband of the young lady? and then, my gracious Fröken, I allowed myself to hope that, perhaps, you would not, under these circumstances, refuse me the hand I had begged for once before, and which was the desire of my existence to obtain. Allow me to say, I love you! My life's happiest hour will be the one in which you trust your fate in my hands, and give to me the power of averting this terrible calamity, which now hangs over your heads, from falling on you and crushing you. Only as your husband can I do this; and thus I repeat, at the risk of offending you, I love you, and from my heart wish to serve you. I have nothing more to add beyond that, under these happy circumstances, I will exert every influence I have to save you from the impending disaster. A word from you, and not one brick or stone of Hafnäs shall be touched. Think then, I beseech you, noble lady, ere you plunge those you love in misery, that a word of yours could have saved them, and sweetened for ever the life of your humble admirer.'

Beatrice read this letter to the end, and then

handed it to her brother in silence. He read it, and then quietly observed,

'The whole of this long letter could have been compressed into the one sentence: "For the last time I say to you, Be my wife, or I will ruin you and your brother."'

'Do you know, Carlos,' said Beatrice, without lifting her eyes from the ground, 'I almost wish sometimes that—that I could make myself marry him?'

'Beatrice!'

'Yes, I do; he almost deserves it of me.'

She sat very still as she spoke—so still, that her brother stared at her, half-frightened at what was coming next.

'Almost, but not quite; it would be too hard a punishment even for him.'

She raised her head, and looked herself again. But never before or since has Carlos ever seen her face as it appeared to him during those few moments.

The letter followed its predecessor into—the

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE SICK-ROOM.

FORTY-EIGHT hours had intervened between the accident at the bay and the Countess' arrival at Hafnäs. Another few days, and, thanks to Dr. Pulsander's skill, good nursing, and a strong constitution, Nils was past the greatest danger. Now everything depended upon his being kept so quiet that no relapse could take place through excitement.

The day after her arrival Countess Nordenstjerna had a conversation with the doctor, in which he asked her if she wished for further advice, and a consultation with some town physician. She listened attentively whilst he described the illness, and how he had treated it, and then thoughtfully said:

'From what you say, doctor, I believe it would be of no use to trouble another doctor to journey here: my son's life or death is in God's hands;

but what man can do for him, I believe you have done. I shall keep him quiet, as you say. It is not any difficulty to do that now. Poor Nils!'

Tears came in her eyes, but she gave the doctor her hand, and thanked him so kindly for what he had done, that he was delighted with her.

'Ah, yes!' said the doctor, when he repeated this little scene, 'if all ladies, mothers and wives, were as sensible as she, we poor doctors would be very glad. She is a dear, sweet little woman that Countess!'

Among the first questions Nils asked his mother when he was allowed to speak, was, if his incognito had been discovered through his illness and her arrival, to which she answered, without a shade of anxiety,

'It was a great pity; but I could not prevent it, unless I had come here as Mrs. Nordén. Do you wish I had done that, Nils?'

After a little pause, he said:

'No, mamma, *that* I could not wish: it's best as it is,' and he took her hand and lifted it to his lips. Then he sunk again into silence, and his mother, not wishing him to speak, was silent too.

But presently came another question:

'Mamma, have you—seen her?'

'Yes,' answered she, without asking which 'her' he meant.

'Is she not charming? Say, mamma, do say!'

She smiled at his eagerness, and told him he must not talk so much. He looked so sorry, that she leant over him, and whispered, 'Yes, she is very beautiful,' and when he began to speak again, she laid her hand on his mouth, and said:

'Think of her as much as you like; but don't talk, else you will never have her.'

'Do you believe, mamma—?' but the hand prevented his saying any more.

A few days after, when he had a little more strength, he asked again,

'Do you believe, mamma,—that I may have any hope one day to win her?'

'That's difficult to say,' answered his mother, smiling; 'but it may be worth trying.'

'It's of no use,' said he, sadly; 'she won't have me.'

'That you don't know; I confess that I—'

'How can she care for such a poor fellow as

I have shown myself to be—?' But he stopped, for he saw his mother was laughing at his doleful voice.

She had determined, however, not to say anything to him of Beatrice's confession to her in the carriage. She was a tender, loving mother; but she knew it was best not to help her son by telling him beforehand what the result of his wooing would be. She gave him encouragement, that was all. The sick-room was now fast becoming a less anxious cause of sorrow. The Countess entertained strong hopes of her son's speedy recovery, for Dr. Pulsander had told her that the injury to the lungs was fast healing, and that, although he was still very weak, he might be half dressed and laid on the sofa.

It was on October 5 that Nils, for the first time, left his bed, and was carried to the sofa under the promise to remain very still, for only a few hours. It was a lovely day, a day no one in Hafnäs will ever forget. Nils was weary with the dressing, and movement, and lying half asleep on the sofa. His mother had just left him, and gone to her own room to write some letters. Brita was in the next room, and had shut the door.

All was still around him, so quiet and still that he could just hear the murmur of the water in the lake under his window. He fell fast asleep—a painless, happy sleep. He saw a brook, running with gentle little ripples between two flower-covered banks. On ran the brook till it came to a big stone which lay in its path; with noisy laughter it bubbled up over the obstruction, and went singing on, never tired, never weary, overcoming each difficulty which lay before it, and rejoicing in its growing strength and constant victories.

Farther down in the valley he saw the same little brook grown into a broad stream, proudly rolling on its way to the sea. A boat floated on it. In this boat he saw himself, lying on soft cushions, and turning his eyes towards a woman who sat steering. It was Beatrice. She looked down at him with a face full of love; and a sensation of strangeness passed through him: he stretched out his arms to her; when, in a moment, his dream changed, the boat had vanished, and he found himself on an island, in the middle of the ocean. He cast his eyes all around; he could see nothing but a boat far, far away.

Presently, as he watched, it came nearer, and nearer; and then he saw it was the same boat which held his darling. Again he stretched out his arms to clasp her to his breast: but the woman had other features; it was not Beatrice. He had seen her before; he knew her face, but where? Ah, it was Elfva! She spoke hot words to him; but he could not hear them. Then he seemed to understand; and his ear caught their meaning: when he awoke. He opened his eyes, and there sat Elfva! Close up to his sofa was her reclining couch, and on it she sat. Her face was full of distress and eagerness, and she held out her arms to him as if she was begging his assistance.

He rubbed his eyes; he hardly knew if he were sleeping or dreaming. Elfva here! she, who never left her own room except under dire necessity, and then the whole family watched the painful process! How, and why had she come to him?

But soon he began to perceive she was in trouble. She spoke quickly and earnestly, but very clearly.

'I may be doing wrong,' she said, 'but I can't

help it. No one will tell you what is going on, and if you don't know, we are lost.'

He sat up.

'What is it, sweet Elfva, that is going on?' said he. 'Thanks beforehand for telling me, but what?'

'Hafnäs will be sold to-day, now, here, by auction, and it's only that wretched Chamberlain who is rich enough to buy it. Oh! good, kind Count Nils, do help us if you can?'

This was too strange. He put his hand to his head, and tried to understand it.

'Hafnäs to be sold! The Chamberlain! I am very sorry, but I don't really understand.'

'Oh, yes! Carlos owes the Chamberlain Schwaryencrona lots and lots of money—I don't know how much, but lots; and now he is angry with Carlos, and forces him to sell our beautiful home. Oh! it's a great pity!'

'Chamberlain Schwaryencrona! Angry with Carlos! He remembered now. The Chamberlain had proposed for Beatrice, and been refused. Gustaf had told him so once. He understood now.

'Do you say it's to-day, Elfva, this auction?

At what o'clock is it, and where?' asked he hastily.

'Ah! it's already begun: in the big drawing-room. I couldn't get here before. Beatrice must have known what I was thinking of, and kept watch over me; but—what are you doing?'

He only heard the words, 'it's already begun.' He stood up on the floor. His head swam round, but he crept, as if in the dark, to his wardrobe, snatched the first coat which came to hand, threw off his dressing-gown, and, putting on the coat, crossed over the room with tottering steps, and vanished through the door.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE AUCTION.

In the grand drawing-room at Hafnäs, about twenty people were assembled. The auction began in the usual order, by reading aloud the conditions of sale, and a description of the estate of Hafnäs. The young Count stood, dressed in the black he still wore for his father, in front of the stove, facing the company, and with an expression in his face which showed very distinctly that, however much suffering this trial caused him, he was not going to flinch from its sad necessity.

At the table sat Chamberlain Schwaryencrona. After the first bow, returned by Carlos politely but coldly, the two gentlemen took no further notice of each other.

At last the bidding began. A speculator from Stockholm bid 400,000 rix-thalers, which a merchant of Götenborg raised to 425,000. The man

from Stockholm immediately said, 'Four hundred and thirty-five thousand;' then the Götenborger called out 'Four hundred and forty-five thousand;' and the Chamberlain quietly said 'Four hundred and fifty thousand.' The bidding now ceased for a little while. Carlos stood very, very still, without saying a word. He bit his lip till the blood came to hide the torture he was in; for if Hafnäs was sold for this sum only, there would still be 25,000 rix-thalers owing, which he had no means of liquidating.

Then the merchant from Götenborg called out 'Four hundred and sixty thousand,' but mumbled between his teeth it was more than he intended offering.

The Chamberlain now again spoke: 'Four hundred and sixty-five thousand;' and here the bidding seemed likely to stand. The auctioneer raised his hammer, saying: 'First time, four hundred and sixty-five thousand! second time, four hundred and sixty-five thousand! third time . . .

'How high has been bidden?' said a voice at his side, and a hand was laid on the arm which was just bringing the hammer down for the third

time. The man turned round, astonished at the interruption. A tall young gentleman stood near him. His face was terribly pale, and his hair and clothes were in great disorder; but that was nothing to the auctioneer, who politely answered him: 'Four hundred and sixty-five thousand have been bidden by Chamberlain Schwaryencrona. The estate is taxed to six hundred thousand,' he added.

'I offer that,' said the same voice.

'Six hundred thousand is offered,' said the auctioneer. 'First time! second time! third time!'

All this had happened so quickly, and in such quietness, that most of those in the room had not been able to seize the meaning of it. Not Carlos, who was looking straight before him, or the Chamberlain, who was leaning his head on his hand; both waiting for the fall of the hammer. The words, 'Six hundred thousand' made them both start. The Chamberlain opened his mouth with astonishment; but Carlos darted over to Nils Nordenstjerna, as soon as he caught sight of him —not before it was time, for Nils' strength was fast ebbing away, and he sank rather than sat down on the chair Carlos pushed under him.

'Would it not be better to send that fellow away?' said he, with a wan smile, as he pointed to the auctioneer. 'If Hafnäs, of necessity, must be sold, I will buy it; but we don't want that man, do we?'

And before Carlos knew what to answer, Nils continued,

'I must be quick back, before mother knows I have left my sofa, or I shall get a scolding; but as long as that fellow sits with his hammer in his hand, so long I shall stay also. Yes, now it's too late—there she is, and I am lost!'

He tried, by joking, to hide how very extremely tired he was; but he was obliged to lean his head back and shut his eyes, he felt so weak.

The auction was really at an end, so the strangers all took their departure, half of them not having understood how it was Hafnäs was sold for such a high price. But the Chamberlain understood it well enough, when he heard from a servant that the tall pale young man was Count Nils Nordenstjerna. With bitter curses in his heart, he foreboded that he had lost both the fair lady and the estate of Hafnäs.

Nils had said in fun that he should be scolded

by his mother; but he was mistaken. She said not a word to him in reproach. She seemed to understand the whole affair as well as if she had known it from the beginning; though, till the instant she entered the drawing-room, and saw her son sitting just inside the door, she had not the least idea of what was going on there. She had him carried up stairs, and determined in her own mind not to leave him alone again. That was all. She knew well enough her son had acted rightly, and her tenderness and care of him now only made him cling more lovingly to his mother than he had ever done before.

A few hours later on in the day, Elfva had a conversation with Countess Nordenstjerna. Poor child! She was terribly frightened at what she had done; and was only quieted when the Countess assured her that the doctor, who had been sent for, had announced it as his opinion that fortunately no harm would come of Nils' walk down stairs, and the excitement he had been under.

'It was not my intention to beg him to do as he did,' said Elfva. 'And when he got up and left the room, I could do nothing but scream for

help; and then Brita came first, and then you. I never was so amazed in my life as when I saw him rise from the sofa.'

'Those who have anything to do with my Nils must accustom themselves to shocks,' answered the Countess, smiling. 'He has always been the same since he was a child. Once, when he was only four years old, he jumped into a pond to save a kitten, and was much astonished when he himself sank, and the kitten swam away from him. I have often laughed at him for that exploit.'

'I want so to tell you why I did as I did,' said little Elfva. 'May I try?'

'Try, dear child,' said the Countess, as she gently stroked the silken pretty curls of the little invalid; 'but I think I understand how it was.'

'You see, dear Countess, there is not much resemblance amongst us all here. Carlos and Beatrice would never, I believe, crave any help either for themselves or us, whatever sorrow or trouble they were in; and yet they would be the first to assist others under the same circumstances. Henrik and Signe are not so proud as Carlos and Beatrice; but they agreed with the others that it

was impossible to say a word to you or Count Nils. I think that Signe was as proud as Carlos about this affair. When they spoke of it, I understood quite well what they meant; but there was one other thing I understood, too, and that was that I am not the least bit proud, and that neither they nor I would be humiliated by telling such kind friends of the state of affairs. Do you comprehend me?'

'Yes, my darling child,' answered the elder lady, kissing Elfva tenderly. 'I comprehend quite well; and I should like to know what would become of us, proud and haughty as we are, if there were no such sweet little messengers to go between us as you, and so bring us together. I don't wonder, though, that Carlos and Beatrice said nothing; they acted like all proud people would have done.'

'I had determined to tell you,' continued Elfva; 'but I had no chance till to-day. As soon as Beatrice left me this morning, I bade Karin, one of the maids, push me as far as Count Nils' room, where I thought you would be, and where I knew Beatrice never entered; but when I came in he was alone, and the noise of my couch

moving along awoke him. I sent Karin to fetch you; and before I knew I had done it, I had told Count Nils everything. So it was.'

The Countess then repeated to Elfva that her son had sent for Carlos to his room, and that they had arranged the money matters satisfactorily between them.

It was impossible for Carlos to refuse the simple, hearty friendliness with which Nils Nordenstjerna begged to be permitted to pay off the unlucky mortgages, and thus insure the future security of Hafnäs.

'My mother,' said he, 'has managed my property so well during my long minority, that I have a large sum of money as yet not invested; and as all my debts are paid, it will be the easiest possible investment I can make of this sum. So let me do it.'

And thus the difficulty was surmounted.

'I must, however, quarrel with Elfva,' said Carlos.

'Yes; and I, too,' answered Nils. 'It was very thoughtless of her not to tell me long before of the auction. It might have been too late; and

then Schwaryencrona would have been master of Hafnäs!'

'Yes; that's true,' said Carlos; 'but I could not do otherwise than I did. Answer me honestly, Count. Would you not have done the same under similar circumstances?'

Nordenstjerna thought ere he answered, slowly,

'Perhaps. At least, I can understand fully why you did so.'

'And then,' added he, smiling, 'it's a good thing that such angels as Elfva remain still on the earth!'

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DOWN STAIRS AGAIN.

When Nils had been on the sofa a few days, he had the doctor's permission to be carried down stairs out into the open air, during the warmest part of the day. When this was first spoken of, he expressed a wish to be carried by Birgir, who would do it lighter and better than any one else. Birgir was asked if he would like to do it, and seemed very pleased that he had been chosen. It has been said before that the tutor had completely won the giant smith's affection; and the Countess had, to show her gratitude for what he had done for her son, expressed a strong and warm desire that he might be allowed to wait on Nils. Birgir presented himself in Nils' room with a face that expressed how very glad he was to see the young gentleman again, whom he had not been allowed to visit since his accident.

'Good morning, Birgir,' said Nils, as the smith

opened the door. 'The doctor is so gracious as to let me go out for a little, but he insists on my being carried. I am obliged to do as he bids, although I should like to show him that I could spring down stairs as well as he, if I only chose. Shall I, doctor? Will you run a race with me?'

'Don't chatter nonsense,' said the doctor, good-naturedly. 'Do I look as if I could run races—least of all with you, Mr. Whiteface. This young gentleman,' said he, turning to Birgir, 'has taken it into his head to be carried as far as the garden by you. Can you do it? But you must not let him drop, for if you do, he will fall to bits, he is so weak, in spite of his talking of running races; and, mind, you are not to let him walk one step the first two days. Do you understand?'

'Yes, I understand,' answered the smith; 'trust to me, sir, I will hold him as firmly as if he were in a vice.'

'Ah! I like that,' said Nils.

'I depend upon you,' answered the doctor. 'I know your skill in taking people with you against their will. See, now! we have that ready.'

'What is it you mean by "that," doctor?' asked Nils, from out of the thick shawls his mother

had wrapped around him. 'If it's me you mean, I protest against being called "that," and being handled like a packet.' His last word was said in the outer room, for Birgir had taken him up in his arms, and was carrying him down stairs as carefully as if he had been a little child. Every one was delighted; and Gustaf ran on before to show the way.

In the garden were Signe and Beatrice. They had not seen him since his illness, and Beatrice required all her self-possession to command herself when she saw his pale face and attenuated figure. But his smile was the same as always, as he greeted the two girls from his uncomfortable position in Birgir's arms. Signe went up to him, and walked by his side, while Beatrice followed behind with Countess Nordenstjerna.

'Elfva told me to congratulate you,' Signe said, 'and to say how glad she is you are out again.'

'I wish Elfva could come out herself,' he answered, kindly. 'Is there no hope?'

'A little,' said Signe; 'she is better since Dr. Pulsander prescribed those gymnastics for her, and he hopes that she will in the end recover.'

Dr. Pulsander walked along, proud and de-

lighted, behind Nils, just like a sculptor whose masterpiece is being borne before him to its public destination.

The Sun-bed was a place on the borders of the lake between the garden and park, and sheltered by a huge overhanging cliff from the cold winds. Here the mid-day sun gathered its rays together as in a focus.

As it was now the middle of October, this was the best place for Nils. Dr. Pulsander gave Birgir directions where to put his statue, and then went a few paces backwards, watching him with interest.

'There! now I have got you there, Count,' said he. 'Only half an hour the first day, and no imprudence.'

Then turning to Birgir, he added: 'You stand there, my fine fellow; and if the Count attempts to get on those long sticks of his he calls legs, you just' . . .

'Well, what then, heartless tyrant? Go on! Reproach the fallen whilst he is helpless, and no one rushes to his rescue!'

'Then put him in the vice again!' said the doctor, as he went off, pretending to be very severe.

The autumn had many fine warm days, and on each one Nils sat out on the Sun-bed many long hours. He enjoyed the beautiful sea air, and felt health and strength coming back to him in each murmur of the rippling waves. No time is so delicious as that following upon an illness, when each day adds to the enjoyment of gaining strength.

Nils' life seemed so happy and bright before him; for he thought he read in Beatrice's lowered eyes love and affection for himself, and in her voice a tone which encouraged him to hope.

He began to long now for some opportunity of once again trying his fortune.

CHAPTER XXIX.

COURTSHIP. THE END.

ONE day Nils sat in his sunny corner, dreaming. His mother was not far off; she was sitting on a stone, and had a book in her hand. The faithful Birgir was there, as usual. He was stooping down on the shore, looking for shells for Nils. Presently he came up to Nils and laid a few on his knee.

The young Count roused himself up, and smiling, said, 'Thank you, Birgir! you are as kind to me as if I were a child. But your trouble will soon come to an end now; the doctor believes I shall be all right again in a little while.'

'Yes, I heard him say so,' answered Birgir. 'I am going away from here myself very soon, so it will be just in time.'

'Are you? I thought you had such a good place here at Hafnäs. Is anything wrong?' asked Nils.

'No, it's not that . . . but . . . but I have an old

father, and I have not heard from him for so long. I should like to go and see him; he is very old.'

'You are quite right. How long is it since you saw him?' asked Nils.

'Nearly six years,' answered the smith.

Something in Birgir's voice, as he spoke of his father, roused Nils' curiosity. He had often tried to get the smith to speak of his family and former history, but he had always failed. This was the first time he had ever heard him mention his father, so he questioned him a little, and by degrees the smith told him everything he had done in his life, and why he had taken to broom stealing.

Nils was interested in the conversation, and so was his mother, who listened very quietly, without interrupting by a word the unusual talkativeness of the rough but kind-hearted man.

They were both so engrossed that they did not notice the approach of Dr. Pulsander, who had come, as he said, 'to drive in the young Count,' for it was getting late, and the sun was not so powerful as it had been an hour ago.

This time the patient had permission to walk back to the Castle, to see if his strength was gain-

ing ground. But at the steps Birgir was told to carry him, although Nils protested against it, saying he knew he could walk up quite well. But the doctor was inexorable.

As they passed the drawing-room door, voices and laughter sounded so merry within, that Nils expressed a wish to go in. Birgir looked at the doctor, whose will he obeyed as an Eastern slave his owner, whenever the question was about Nils. The doctor gave a nod after a little hesitation, and Birgir carried Nils in, and put him down in an easy chair.

Carlos, Beatrice, Signe, and Fröken von Claaken were all there. Carlos sat at a table in the middle of the room, singularly taken up with something he was doing. Before him he had a saucer in which was a little mould, and from time to time he poured a liquid on it from a flask he held in his hand. His betrothed stood leaning over his shoulder, with a face full of fun and mischief, every now and then breaking forth into the merry laughter which had been heard in the corridor. A little farther off stood Fröken von Claaken, also attracted by the lively conversation, whilst she watched with much interest what was

going on. She informed Nils and the doctor, as soon as they came in, that Carlos believed he had discovered marl in a field, and that he was now busy trying to prove it with vinegar.

'Perhaps there's not enough vinegar,' said Carlos, and he poured more from the flask over the contents of the saucer. 'Now, Signe, watch it carefully, and see if you can't discover any fermenting. There *must* be marl on that place, for there grows there a kind of weed, which always shows marl is to be found near. Look now! I believe it begins to stir; do you see?'

Signe stooped her head over the saucer, and a silence ensued whilst the mould was carefully examined. Every one else was in a state of expectation. Signe's face by degrees grew more and more amused, and when at last two fragments of red mould succeeded by mere chance in working themselves out of the vinegar-drenched earth, and after their release no other result of the chemical effect of the vinegar took place, she burst out into a merry laugh followed by all the others, till even Carlos himself was obliged to join in the merriment.

'The vinegar is not strong enough,' said Carlos; 'I must try it with sulphuric acid.'

Aunt von Claaken could not resist the temptation of saying, when Carlos came near her,

'Tell me, dear Carlos, who told you that marl ferments when vinegar is thrown over it? Was it the same person who gave you the information about the cow's horns?'

'There now! you bring up that old story again! Then I shall be off. You always say that when you want to take me down a peg. Aunty is fond of doing that, let me tell you all. It's her hobby-horse, and the only kind of horse she understands!'

'Yes, I like that! I understand horses as well as you do cows,' answered the old woman; but Carlos had already vanished with his saucer and flask, and carried Signe off with him.

The others begged for the story of the cows, so the funny old lady, nothing loth, told it.

'When Carlos first became master of Hafnäs,' said she, 'he became suddenly very much interested in the dairy, although up to that time he had never troubled himself about that branch of farming. He had too, strange to say, so little

knowledge of cows that he didn't know an old one from a young one. That, however, did not prevent him from driving alone to a cattle market to buy some cows. He came back late in the afternoon, with a decided increase to the dairy, and the next morning he invited us all down to see the new animal. But we found the dairy-maid in despair. She thought that the Count must have picked out the oldest cow in the whole market, for it turned out to be a venerable matron of seventeen years' standing. There's a strong suspicion, though Carlos never will acknowledge it, that he had taken the many rings on the horns to be a sign of its genuine quality, and therefore judged all cows to be good which were ornamented in the same way.'

As soon as Fröken von Claaken had finished this story, she hurried off to attend to something she had to do up stairs; and presently one and the other left the room till only Beatrice and Nils Nordenstjerna remained.

For a few minutes they were both silent. They dared not look at each other. She had nothing to do—no work, no book—which might help her in this trying moment. For an instant she had

a great inclination to jump up and run away. She heard her own heart beating quicker and louder, till she found herself involuntarily counting its beats.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—here she heard Nils take a deep breath, as if he meant to speak; but no, he said nothing. Her counting went on: nine, ten, eleven, twelve; and she was just listening for the twenty-first, when he said:

'Fröken Beatrice, I wonder sometimes if I did not make myself very ridiculous in your eyes, by my conduct. . . . I mean when I came here as tutor.'

She did not answer, so he went on:

'It's so difficult to describe why I did so, and no one seems to understand me. But, how much more ridiculous I was, when I . . . I, as tutor, ventured to . . . to . . .'

She interrupted in a low voice:

'I did not laugh at you.'

'No, you did not laugh at me, Fröken Beatrice; you were very indulgent to me—much more indulgent than my imprudent, unwarrantable conduct deserved. You bade me forget, and

promised to forgive me, when I had forgotten everything. Do you remember that?'

'Yes,' she answered, in the same low tone.

'But I can't forget.'

Again she answered not a word, but sat quite still, leaning her cheek on her hand, and with the expression in her eyes quite hidden by the long drooping black lashes.

'It was easy for you to say "forget," but it was impossible for me to obey!'

'It was not easy for me to say "forget."'

'No, because you are so good. It gave you pain, to give me pain. I quite understand.'

'No, Count Nils, you do not understand rightly.'

He looked at her astonished; then a sudden joy dawned on him.

'Fröken Beatrice!' he exclaimed—forgetting his weakness, the doctor, and everything else, as he sprang from his chair, and went over to her. 'Fröken Beatrice! I . . . I hardly dare say how I understand your words; perhaps even now I am deceiving myself. Was it . . . are you . . . it can't be possible! Was it hard for you to say to me, "forget," because . . . for . . .'

She looked up at him, and smiled.

'For my *own* sake, yes . . . it was.'

He knelt down in front of her, and covered her hands with kisses.

'Ah, Beatrice! Did you . . . did you love me then? Tell me . . . did you?'

She stooped over him, low down:

'What will . . .' she hesitated, and blushed scarlet, 'what wilt *thou*, that I shall say, more than I have already said? I love thee, and have loved thee, long.'

She hardly heard what he answered, but it was,

'Say that again! say it again a thousand times! I never knew such joy was for me!'

She did not repeat it a thousand times; but he was happy and content with a few times less.

Their new-found joy was interrupted presently by Dr. Pulsander, who came in to see after his patient. His power was, however, now broken; for Beatrice took upon herself the future care and speedy recovery of her lover. A few days later on, Beatrice said to her betrothed,

'You must listen to what I have to say, for it is very serious.'

'Serious! Is it really necessary? I think I am not yet strong enough to . . .'

She laughed, obliged him to sit down in the most comfortable easy chair in the room, and began.

'It will soon be over, what I have to say. I wish you to properly understand my past behaviour, and then judge me neither more nor less severely than I deserve.'

'I promise to be an impartial judge; but first I will ask you a question,' said he gravely. 'Why did you allow this beautiful little hand'—and he took hold of it as he spoke—'to draw an absurd caricature of me before I even came here?'

'A caricature!'

'Yes; and here it is! Answer now, in honour and in truth, is it like me? Look at it!' and he handed her the drawing which had fallen at his feet the first day he came to Hafnäs.

Directly she saw it, she remembered all about it; but she could not imagine how it got into his hands.

'I thought it was destroyed long ago,' said she, half laughing, yet very much puzzled. 'How did

you get it? It could never have been in a fair way. Who's the culprit now, I wonder?'

He told her how it happened.

'Wasn't I right to take it?' said he. 'My own portrait, with my own name underneath!'

'Your own name! Where is that?'

'Here. "Mr. N. N., a flower of Swedish youth." N. N. is meant for Nils Nordén, is it not?'

'You are right and wrong too,' she answered, smiling. "N. N." can mean Nils Nordén; but I confess the drawing was my idea of the appearance of a student.'

'And is it like me? Now just say?' persisted Nils.

She looked from him to the drawing, and from the drawing back again to him, as if she thought they were alike. At last, she said, laughing,

'You are a paler flower now than you were; but soon you will get more colour, and then the likeness will be perfect! But now, listen to what I have to say, and be serious, do!'

Then she added—

'Why was it, do you think, I would not have you that first time, when you sung under my window?'

'From pride?'

'Yes, from pride; and also from principle. I believed I had done wrong in loving you; and I had so often heard people say that marriage between persons of unequal rank was always a mistake, that I was quite convinced it must be true.'

'And do you think so now?'

'No! I believe that a happy marriage depends upon other things than mere riches and birth—upon education, ways of thinking, taste, similarity of thought; and, above all, that the characters are . . . I hardly know how I shall express myself, but they must not be alike; but . . . and . . . yet. . . . What are you looking at in that way, instead of helping me to say what I mean!'

'I am looking at you, and thinking how very beautiful you are; and that if all lecturers were like you, how very easy to be persuaded their audience would be.'

'Do you agree with me in what I said just now?'

'Yes; all that you said just now, and all that you mean to say in the future. I defy you to assert any one thing I won't immediately declare is true,' he answered, gaily.

'You are just . . . an idiot!'

'I have told myself that a hundred times since I have been here at Hafnäs, so that's nothing new!'

'Now, please do be serious for once, Nils. Do you think I did right to refuse you that first time, after the serenade?' she asked, earnestly.

'Yes, perfectly right. I never admired you so much as when you reprimanded me that time here, in this very room. You were only too gentle with me. You should have told Carlos, and then he would have shown me the door.'

'But I loved you,' she whispered.

'Ah! if I had only known it then!'

'But you don't know yet that I had already changed my ideas, before I knew you were a rich and noble lord. It was when you nearly lost your life in your lady's service, my knight. Then it was I determined that, if you would still have me, to give you my life in return, tutor as you were; for during that terrible trial many of my former prejudices vanished, never more, I hope, to return.'

He pressed her to his heart.

'You noble, high-minded, brave girl! You

always do what you think is right, however hard it is for you, or however much the world is against you! God be thanked, for giving me such a faithful, loving wife! With thee by my side I shall never fear anything that the future may bring. Yes, yes, darling!

> Arm in Arm mit dir,
> So fordr' ich mein Jahrhundert in die Schranken!'

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